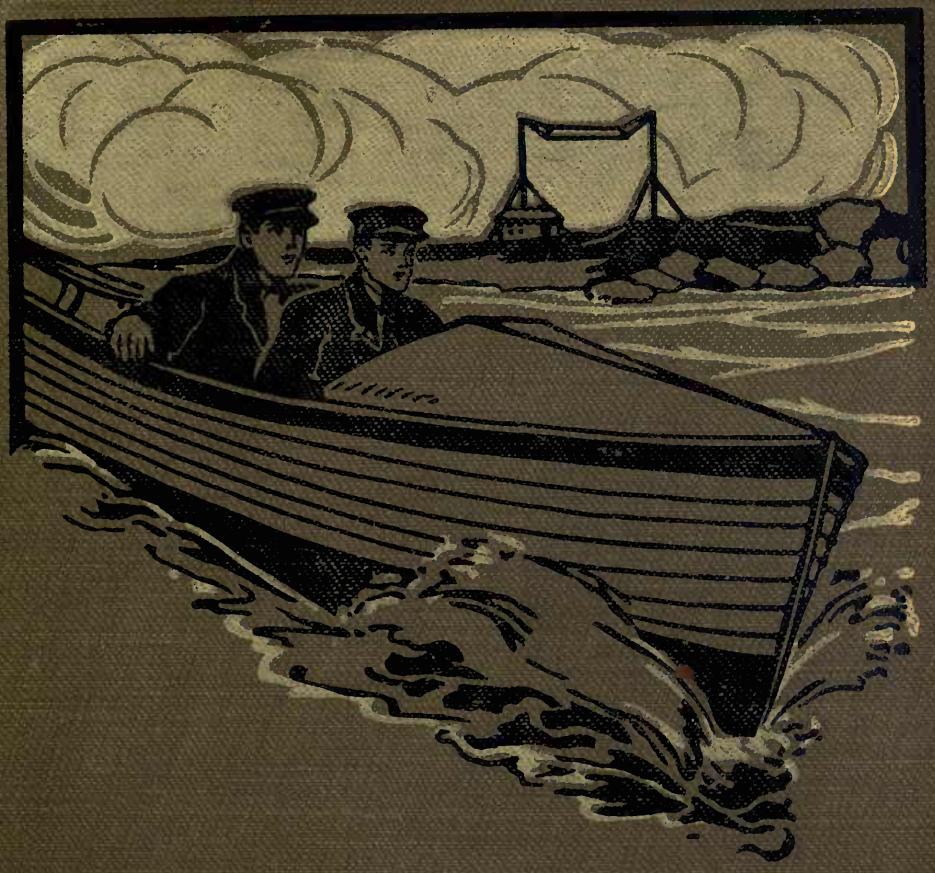
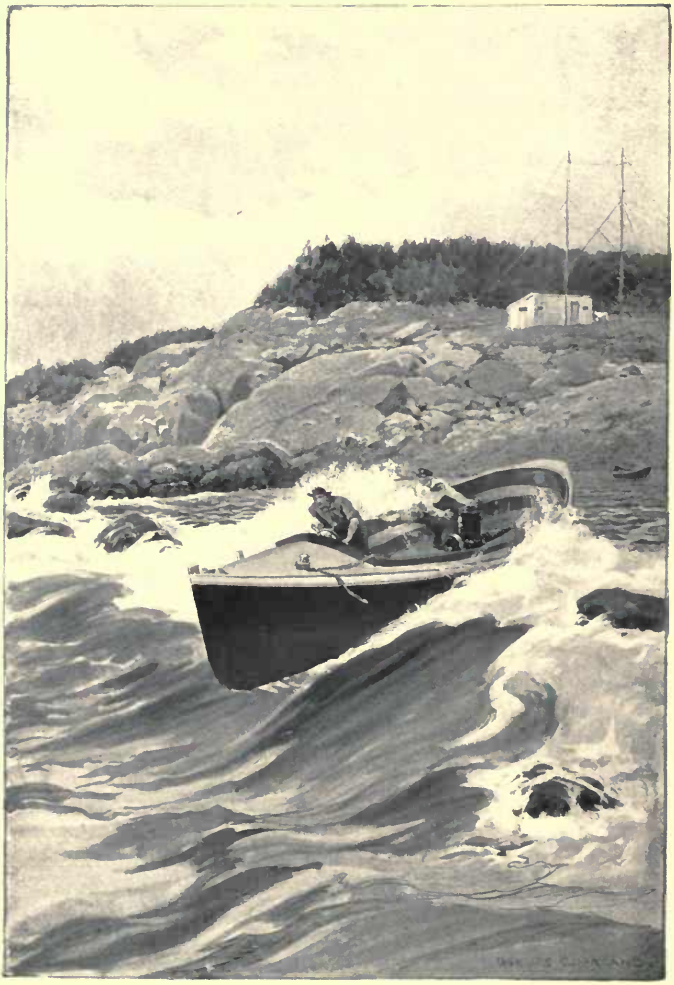


THE WIRELESS STATION AT SILVER FOX FARM

JAMES OTIS



FOR ONE INSTANT THE TWO LITERALLY HELD THEIR BREATH

The Wireless Station at Silver Fox Farm

BY

JAMES OTIS

AUTHOR OF "AUNT HANNAH AND SETH,"
"TWO STOWAWAYS," ETC.

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THE WIRELESS STATION AT SILVER FOX FARM

CHAPTER I

AN ODD BUSINESS

"WHO ever heard of raising foxes to sell?" and Ned Bartlett gave way to mirth because the statement made by his particular friend, Paul Simpson, seemed to him absolutely ridiculous.

"But father doesn't count on raising such foxes as are to be found around here. Why don't you wait to hear all the details before feeling so funny?" and it could readily be understood that Paul was considerably more than vexed.

"If there are any details to the business of raising foxes for the market, I'll be willing to wait a long while in order to hear about them," and Ned scrambled up on a pile of logs which had been rafted down from the woods of northern Maine to be sawn into lumber in the mills of Seaview, seating himself on the topmost in the attitude of one who is ready to hear that which he discredits before the hearing.

"Perhaps you have read about silver foxes, which are to be found in Russia, Siberia, and I don't know how many other places," Paul began, speaking almost sharply, and Ned replied laughingly:

"I never even knew that foxes really wore silver coats."

"Now don't try again to be funny," and one might have believed that Paul's temper was strained to the explosive point. "I'm not saying that they are really the color of silver; but the fur has a tint of bluish black, with just enough white hairs mixed in to give it a white sheen. At all events, a first-class pelt from a so-called silver fox is worth more than two hundred dollars, because——"

"What?"

"That is a fact. You must know that even in the countries where they are to be found wild, silver foxes are far from being plentiful, and because of such fact the pelts command a big price. Now my father has contracted with a Russian fur trader for three pairs of live foxes, and, what is more, he is to pay seven hundred dollars for each couple."

"Seven— Why, that is two thousand one hundred dollars for six miserable foxes!"

"Yes, and a big lot of money must be spent before they will raise young ones large enough to have marketable hides. It's a great business, when you come to look it over," and now Paul spoke in a friendly, confidential tone. "Father has bought, or leased, the whole of Barren island, and it's there he counts on establishing a fox farm."

"Barren island!" Ned exclaimed. "Why, that forsaken spot is a full twenty miles straight out to sea from here!"

"It is set down on the charts as just twenty-two miles, if you insist on being geographically correct."

"But why does he go so far away from every-

where?" Ned asked in surprise, now beginning to fancy that perhaps there might be something savoring of business in this scheme of raising silver foxes.

"In order that he may be able to protect the animals while they are breeding, of course. What chance would foxes have against dishonest hunters, if they were penned up where anybody could come at them?"

"It isn't impossible, if a person was eager for such game, to go over to Barren island," Ned suggested; and Paul replied:

"That is true; but an island can be guarded more easily than could the same area on the mainland. When a man invests twenty-one hundred dollars in foxes, and counts on spending twice or three times as much more before he can get any returns from the business, it stands him in hand to take every possible precaution against loss."

"Does any one live on Barren island?" Ned asked after a brief pause.

"Old Daniel Downs, his wife, and two sons. Father has hired the whole family to take charge of the island. The boys, Ernest and Sam, are to keep watch day and night, after the foxes arrive, to prevent any one from landing there."

"They can't stop a vessel from coming to anchor if there is any harbor on the shore of the island," Ned suggested, and Paul replied eagerly, as if he had been on the point of referring to the same subject:

"Father believes the greatest danger will come from a visit of that kind, therefore he hired the entire Downs family as guards. Of course the master of a vessel

has a right to make harbor at any place when stress of weather demands it. Father realizes that the curiosity of the people will be aroused when it is known that he has started a fox farm, and it is reasonable to suppose that yachtsmen visiting the Maine coast will heave to off Barren island in order to see how such a place looks. You can understand that the animals would be disturbed so seriously that they might not become domesticated, if the island was overrun with visitors."

"It won't be any easy job to prevent people from going ashore there," Ned suggested as the difficulties of the peculiar business began to present themselves.

"But that isn't the worst part of it," Paul cried, pleased because his friend was displaying so much interest in this odd method of making money from furs. "Yachtsmen and curious people will come only in the daytime and during fair weather; but when it is generally known that the pelt of one of these foxes is worth two hundred dollars or more, it is likely efforts will be made by men who would not hesitate at committing a crime, to kill and carry away the animals which have cost father so much money. Such men would come in foul weather instead of fair, and by night rather than day. There is where the greatest danger to the business will be found, and that is why father counts on sending me to make certain the Downs family live up to their orders."

"You? You go to Barren island? What could you do toward preventing a gang of men from carrying away the foxes, if they could find them?" Ned cried in amazement.

"Perhaps not very much single-handed," Paul replied modestly; "but I can see to it that the Downs family do their full duty, and I am able to run a power boat fairly well."

"That little craft of yours wouldn't live an hour so far at sea, when the weather was heavy."

"I am to have a 32-foot Hampton dory, with a 6-horsepower engine, and such a boat as that will live where an ordinary yacht would founder," Paul replied triumphantly.

"Well, say, your father is going into the business in great shape! I wish I might have a finger in the pie; but I won't even get a chance to see you on patrol in your new craft!" Ned cried in a tone of envy. "Here I am tied to this blooming old academy another year, simply because I didn't buckle down to my books last term as you did. I might have graduated all right if I hadn't spent so much time with the fishermen while you were plugging in great shape."

With his face buried in his hands, and his elbows on his knees, Ned Bartlett gave himself up to mourning over his wilful waste of time, as many another fellow has done before him.

"Why not run over with my old dory in fair weather and spend a Sunday now and then?"

"It couldn't be done," Ned replied mournfully. "I dropped so far behind in mathematics last year that I don't dare take the chances of being caught on Barren island in a storm and be forced to stay there two or three days. I *must* graduate next spring, or stand disgraced before all my people. It was bad enough to

have failed last year. Another such exhibition of ignorance as I gave then would cause father and mother, with good reason, to be ashamed of me."

"We might have had such a jolly time this summer if you could go with me," Paul said in a low tone as if simply giving words to his thoughts, and Ned cried sharply:

"Don't! There's no need to remind me that I made all kinds of a fool of myself by idling away the time while you fellows were working. I thought it was going to be mighty hard when I believed you would be at home; but now! There isn't a fellow in this town of Seaview, except you, whom I'd chum with, and you're the same as running away from me!"

This was a reproach which Paul could not well afford to let pass unheeded, and he replied quite hotly:

"It was you who ran away from me last fall when the fishing fleet left port, and——"

"Yes, and by making such a fool of myself I lost all chance of passing the exams. I wish I had as many legs as a spider, so that I might kick myself!"

"There's no sense in crying over spilt milk," Paul said in a soothing tone as his friend gave way to vain regrets. "Come with me, and we'll have one more spin in the old dory. The Hampton boat is a much better craft, of course; but I shan't get to liking her as well as I do the one we've cruised in so many times."

"Don't you count on coming over here from the island during the summer?" Ned asked in a mournful tone as he followed his friend toward the pier.

'Father thinks I ought not leave after the foxes have been landed, unless he is there to take my place."

"When are you going?"

"Some time next week; as soon as the Hampton boat arrives."

"And I shan't be able even to hear from you," Ned said in a tone of deepest despair, and then, as he involuntarily glanced toward his home on the hill the expression of sorrow on his face suddenly gave way to one of excitement. "Say, Paul, why won't it be possible for us to have a chat with each other every day?"

"A chat with each other?" and Paul turned to face his friend as if believing his senses had suddenly taken flight. "It isn't probable we shall even see each other during a full year. Father thinks I should be able to stay on Barren island that length of time."

"Your silver fox farm is only twenty-two miles away, and with one of those on the island——"

Ned interrupted himself to point at two tall spars with their guys of wire, and a weblike antenna suspended between them, which stood nearby his home.

"Why, Ned!" Paul cried in delight. "What a chump I am not to have thought of such a scheme!"

"You helped me put up that apparatus, and I'll run the risk of taking a week's vacation from the academy to help you raise one like it on the island. Then, every day at a certain moment we'll come together for a chat. I'm not very strong on silver-fox farming, but I surely am as well posted as are you on wireless telegraphy."

"It's the very biggest kind of an idea," and Paul Simpson wheeled about to stare at his friend as if lost

in amazement because such a plan had not presented itself to his mind before.

During the six months or more just passed the two boys had been deeply interested in what had presented itself to them as a mystery—wireless telegraphy. They had gained so much knowledge on the subject as to be able to intercept messages sent from a distance of thirty or forty miles; but because of their ignorance of the code generally used by operators of the wireless, they had thus far been unable to send any message.

The fathers of the two boys had looked upon the experiments as coming rather in the way of childish sport than anything which might prove to be of practical value, and, therefore, the amateur telegraphers were forced so to curtail their expenses that the apparatus near Ned Bartlett's home was not of such strength and efficiency as it might have been had the lads had more money at their disposal.

Both understood all the defects in their work, and knew full well how they might be remedied by the expenditure of more money, yet had not been able thus far to come at the necessary amount.

At that very moment of their joy at having, as it seemed, hit upon the means of communicating freely with each other during such time as Paul was forced to remain on Barren island, the unpleasant fact presented itself that they had expended all their funds in the erection of this one station at Seaview, and with such realization came the question of how the apparatus might be duplicated at the silver fox farm when they were virtually penniless.

The same thought was in the mind of each, for as the expression of joy on Paul's face gave way to one of disappointment and perplexity, Ned said mournfully:

"There's no use in asking our fathers for the cash that will be needed; at least, I know it would be time wasted to say anything about it at home, for every one there believes we the same as threw our money away in putting up that one-horse apparatus, although we have been able to report no little of maritime news since it was in working shape."

"My father hasn't said anything whatever regarding the scheme; but it has been plainly seen that he did not count it as of any great value, while mother has told me more than once that I had better have kept at my books than spend so much time in play. It seems tough, when you think that we might talk with each other while I am away, but are prevented from doing so because of lacking a few dollars."

"I will tell you what I'll do," Ned said suddenly after a brief pause. "Eben Dyer offered me ten dollars for my rifle, but I wouldn't sell it to him because I paid fourteen, and it is just as good as new. If he's willing now to give the same price, he shall have it, and perhaps we can raise a little more in some way. Why it would be better to run in debt for the material than give up the plan."

Paul appeared doubtful as to this last suggestion. First, because his father had instilled into his mind the principle that a boy or a man should not, simply for purposes of pleasure, contract a debt, and secondly because he had grave doubts as to whether they would be

able to establish a credit with any house selling electrical supplies.

"There is my old dory," he said, as if speaking to himself. "She surely should be worth fifty dollars, and while I hate like the mischief to part with her, I'd rather do it than give up all hope of having a wireless station on the island. Let's go down to the shipyard, and see if we can find any one who will buy her."

"But suppose you should sell her for fifty dollars, when she's worth at least seventy-five, and then something happened that you'd want me to come over to the island; I'd be tied here for lack of a boat."

"Now you are crossing bridges before you come to them, as father says. If it was necessary for me to have you at Barren island, I surely could run across in the Hampton boat after you; but if we kept the old boat for the sake of your coming across in her, there would be no means of my letting you know that you were wanted, for the wireless station must be built before we can get together after I leave here."

Clearly it was impracticable to raise the desired amount of money by the sale of the dory, and also certain that the proceeds of the boat would not be sufficient for their purpose. It seemed to the boys as if at the very moment when they had conceived what to them was a most brilliant scheme, disappointment stood in their path, and it is quite possible they would have failed to continue their efforts in that direction, believing defeat was certain, had not kindly fortune sent in their way the one instrument above all others for the removal of this particular obstacle.

And surprising though it may seem, this instrument was none other than Paul's father, he who, as his son believed, looked upon wireless telegraphing as a childish sport rather than practical work.

"Are you two lads already bidding each other good-by for the summer?" Mr. Simpson asked in a jovial tone, and Paul turned upon him a face on which was written deepest disappointment, as he replied:

"We have been trying to find out how it might be possible for us to raise a certain amount of money, and have come to an end of planning."

"Why can't two able-bodied lads such as you raise by honest labor as much in the way of cash as you may need? I fancy your wants are not very great."

"That's just the trouble of it, sir," Ned replied quickly. "Our desires far outstrip our earning capacity. If we could get along without Paul's old dory, we might raise what is needed."

"Are you thinking of selling your boat, my son?" Mr. Simpson asked in surprise. "Surely you two lads cannot need as much money as she is worth."

"Ned is willing to sell his rifle, and has an offer of ten dollars for it. The only way by which we can raise enough more, owing to the fact that I must go over to Barren island so soon, is by selling the dory, and yet that would knock our plans all askew."

"Perhaps if you were to explain what your plans are, I might understand the situation better," Mr. Simpson said, but without any very great show of eagerness to learn what the boys had in mind.

"We wanted to put up a wireless station on Barren

island, so that Ned and I could talk with each other at any time," Paul replied hesitatingly, for he believed his father would immediately make sport of any such idea, and the lad was thoroughly surprised when Mr. Simpson said heartily:

"Such a scheme as that would suit me exactly. Are you lads capable of working a wireless?"

"We have been doing so since January," Ned replied eagerly. "Don't you remember that we picked up messages from two steamers this spring?"

"I do not understand the principle of wireless telegraphy myself, therefore it is I am asking whether the fact that you could pick up a message from a distance, presupposes that you are able to send one."

"It is much more simple to send than to receive," Paul replied as he recovered somewhat from the surprise which came upon him at learning that his father approved of the scheme.

"Very well, you are at liberty to order in my name such material as may be needed, and I will pay the bills with the understanding that I shall have the use of the stations in case they may be needed in my new business."

There is little need to say that the boys readily agreed to such a proposition, and five minutes later, when Mr. Simpson had continued on his way to the village, the two stood mutely gazing into each others' faces as if already doubting the evidences of their senses.

But little time was needed, however, to bring them to a full realization of what they believed was the rarest good fortune, and there was no further thought of

taking a sail in the old dory, for if the new station was to be erected before the arrival of the silver foxes, it was necessary they set about the work of gathering the materials without delay.

After having made a memorandum of such articles as would be needed to put up an apparatus equal in electrical force to the one at Ned's home, the question arose as to how much further they might go in the enterprise; that is to say, whether they would be warranted in strengthening the power of the station at Seaview, and building a new one on the island in unison with it, or if they must cut down expenses to the lowest possible notch. Therefore, as soon as might be after this matter came up for discussion, they sought out Paul's father to learn his views on the subject.

"So you are willing to admit that what you have already done is not exactly as it should be?" he asked with a laugh, and Paul set about explaining how, by certain additional outlays of money, it would be possible for them to enlarge their plans to such extent that instead of confining operations within a circle of forty or fifty miles, the stations might readily, and at comparatively small expense, be made sufficient to receive and send messages twice or three times that distance.

"So far as concerns my end of the scheme, all I desire is that you shall be able to maintain communication between Barren island and the mainland. If there is a possibility that you might make more certain of perfect success by the expenditure of an additional fifty or an hundred dollars, why I am willing to stand the expense in order to guard against failure; but remem-

ber this, lads: There are a hundred cents in every dollar, and I am not willing to put out good money for the purpose of childish experiments. If you know exactly what may be needed to establish these stations, and are confident it can be done by you, without calling in expert assistance, which would be expensive, then, as I said before, I am ready to pay the bills."

But for the fact that Paul reminded his comrade very sharply, Ned might have forgotten that, from his parents' point of view, it was absolutely necessary he should pass a successful examination at the Academy during the following spring. He was so excited and overjoyed by the possibility of going more deeply into the mystery of wireless telegraphy as to forget entirely his school duties, and this, as Paul explained, would perhaps be fatal to their scheme, since it was necessary, if they were to hold communication one with another throughout the summer, that Ned's parents were not opposed to his spending a certain amount of time in such a manner.

Therefore, it was decided that Paul should attend to the purchase of the materials, making ready everything, so far as possible, at Seaview, and that Ned perform his part of the labor only when they were ready to set out for Barren island.

In order to do this last a short vacation from the academy was essential, and in order that it might not work to Ned's disadvantage, it was agreed that he should in the meanwhile devote all his time to study, to the end that he might take in advance such work as would be given the students during his absence.

Now in telling this story, which is one concerning the raising of silver foxes, rather than of wireless telegraphy, much space might be taken up with technical description of wave detectors, circuit condensers, inductive coils, and in fact all that goes to make up a wireless station, and yet the end of the tale would not be advanced.

Therefore, it seems better to say briefly that Paul, with the assistance of his father, succeeded in purchasing such a portable outfit for wireless telegraphy as the signal corps in the United States Army use; and this done, the remainder of the work seemed to the lads simple.

There was on Barren island sufficient in the way of growing timber to provide them with spars, and on the second day after the Hampton boat arrived at Seaview, Paul was ready to begin work on that station which should connect Silver Fox Farm with the headland near Ned's home.

The new power boat was a beauty from a seaman's point of view. Staunch, well equipped, and unquestionably able to withstand any weather that might be encountered during the voyage of twenty-two miles.

It is proof of Ned's determination that this scheme of his and Paul's should not interfere with his studies, when we set it down that until the hour arrived when the voyage to Barren island was to be begun, he had not seen the new craft, nor was he aware, save in a general way, of what her cargo consisted. Nearly every moment of his waking hours had been spent in poring over the advanced tasks which his instructors had set

him, and he could say truthfully that the visit to Silver Fox Farm might be prolonged a full seven days without interfering with his academical work.

The sun did not rise as early on the Monday morning set for the departure as did the boys. They were up a good hour before he sent warning shafts of light to proclaim his coming, and the day had not yet fully dawned when the mooring lines were cast off and the Hampton boat stood out from the little pier, breasting the ocean swell in such a manner as gave ample promise of her seaworthiness.

"This is something like a craft," Ned said in a tone of admiration as he stood at the wheel while Paul anxiously watched the machinery, listening jealously to learn if she missed a stroke. "I've seen a good many power boats; but this goes ahead of them all."

"She's the best of her class that father could buy," Paul replied modestly. "I took her out for a spin yesterday, and she behaved like a lady, which is saying a good deal for a new boat."

"Indeed it is! Say, what a time you will have in her this summer, eh? Knocking around Barren island, no matter what the weather may be, for she will stand anything. If I'd been a decent fellow instead of a simpleton, you and I could have been together from now until winter."

"Don't think of what might have been, now when you are doing your best to make up for it," Paul replied soothingly. "If the silver fox business turns out anywhere near what father expects, there may be a chance another summer for you and me to cruise in this

boat, warning off curious ones from the island, and making certain no person lands to steal the stock."

"It's a long look ahead, from now until next summer," Ned said mournfully. "A full year; and by that time your father may have found that silver foxes and Barren island don't go well together. The people here in the town think that he's next door to being crazy. They say that in the first place you can't raise those kind of animals down here, and secondly, even if they live, they won't breed, and if they breed, the fur won't be as valuable as if they had remained in colder regions."

"Yes, I've heard a good deal against the scheme, and father himself isn't so certain that it will be a success. Yet he believes the chances are in his favor, if he can prevent people from interfering with the animals, and that's why he is going to spend so much money guarding the place. If it wasn't for his fears, we wouldn't be in a boat like this just now, nor would we have the material for a wireless station aboard. When you come to think of it, Ned, you are not so unfortunate because of failing to pass the exams last year."

"How do you make that out?"

"Why, you had rather run a wireless station than farm silver foxes, and father has an idea that our scheme is a great one, so far as his business is concerned. It might be possible for some of you in Seaview to learn when people were making ready to steal the animals, and we on the island could get warning by the wireless. Or, again, something might come up which would cause us to need help from the mainland, and how could we get it without our stations? There-

fore, if you had passed, one or the other of us would be forced to remain in Seaview, else we couldn't work the business."

"And if it had not been for the silver foxes we wouldn't have had two complete wireless stations, eh?" Ned added laughingly.

Having thus persuaded himself, or been persuaded, that perhaps his failure to pass the examination would prove a blessing in disguise, Ned grew curious as to what had been purchased for the new station, and the two hours which were occupied in the run from Seaview to Barren island were spent in going over detail by detail all that had been provided in the way of an outfit, while at the same time the boys had mapped out the work which was to be done immediately upon their arrival.

It was yet reasonably early in the day when the Hampton boat came to anchor in the little cove nearby which stood the home of Mr. Daniel Downs, and his two sons put out at once in a dory to learn who the newcomers might be.

These two lads, who had never left Barren island save for short visits to Seaview, were thoroughly excited and decidedly pleased at learning that Paul was to spend the summer with them; that the Hampton boat was to be used in running the fox farm; and that Ned would remain on the island a week.

When, however, a hurried explanation of what the newcomers intended to do in the way of erecting a station on the island was made, the lads not only disbelieved what was told to them, but showed no little signs of anger because the town boys were come to

them with a ridiculous story, thinking they would believe such a yarn. The idea of sending a message from Barren island to Seaview, twenty-two miles across the ocean, simply by the aid of a couple of spars and a lot of wire, was ridiculous!

"But it can be done, and it is done every day," Ned said sharply when Sam Downs declared boldly that neither he nor his brother would be "stuffed" by any such nonsense. "Haven't you read in the papers about wireless telegraphy?"

"Wa'al, we don't get a newspaper out here very often."

"Surely you see them now and then?"

"Yes, father brought one back when he went over to Seaview two years ago; but there wasn't anything in it about your yarn."

"My father says you are to help us trim and put up two spars, and once we get the station in order, you shall see that it will be possible for us to send a message from here to Seaview."

"With nothing but the air for it to go on?" Sam Downs asked petulantly, and Paul replied stoutly:

"With nothing but the air for it to go on."

"Wa'al, when that time comes, I'll be able to walk from here to town without wetting my feet," Sam Downs said with a laugh of incredulity, and then he would have gone on shore without lending a hand toward taking off the cargo, but that Paul showed his father's written orders to the effect that he and his brother should do their share in the work of installing the station.

CHAPTER II

THE STATION

WHEN the unloading of the Hampton boat was begun the Downs boys were by no means willing workers, and had it not been for the positive instructions given in Mr. Simpson's letter, it is more than probable they would have absolutely refused to lend a hand. To their minds Paul and Ned had concocted a ridiculous story of being able to send messages across the water without connecting wires, and were amusing themselves in an attempt to deceive.

Therefore it was that the island lads worked sulkily at first; but as the odd-looking cargo was transferred from the Hampton boat to the dory, they began to have an idea that perhaps this "fairy story" might have some little foundation of truth.

The Downs boys were not so simple but that they realized that this queer collection must be connected with something which they had never before seen or heard about, and as the work progressed their curiosity became more and more lively, until both were in a state of high excitement.

"I'm not allowin' that there's any truth in the yarn you've been tellin', an' surely I know that this 'ere stuff hasn't anything to do with raising silver foxes," Sam said when they were ready to go on shore, while Paul was covering the motor and otherwise making the Hampton boat ready for the night. "You've got some

plan in your head that I never heard of, an' I'll be glad to see it worked out."

"There's no use for us to keep repeating that we have been telling the truth about the possibility of sending messages without connecting wires," Ned said just a bit impatiently. "But in twenty-four hours after the station has been erected, and I have gone back to Seaview, you'll have learned a lesson that will be valuable."

"Well, seein' how we're bound to help you in your foolishness, an' can't do anything but wait, since we've got to stay on the island 'cause it's our home, we may as well agree that perhaps there is somethin' at the bottom of all this which we'll be able to come at later. Where are you goin' to carry the truck?"

"We'll store it in your father's house until we get the spars in position," Paul said as he stepped on board the dory, his work of putting the boat to rights having come to an end. "The first thing is to find two spars forty or fifty feet long. Are there many trees on the island?"

"Quite a few; but we'll have decently hard work, I reckon, to find a couple as tall as you want. I am allowin' they will need to be straight, eh?"

"That isn't absolutely necessary; do the best you can for us."

"Meanin' that Sam and me are to look after that end of the work, eh?" Ernest asked.

"There is no reason why you shouldn't. We can't be of any great assistance in felling timber, and may have to do some hunting around before deciding upon

the site for the station. You two go ahead in your own way. Is there any lumber on the island?"

"Your father sent four or five thousand feet of boards, an' some few scantlin's," Sam replied with a grin. "What are you countin' on buildin'?"

"A little shanty where we can be sheltered from the rain and the wind while working the apparatus."

"I reckon you've got the right to take what lumber you want, seein's it belongs to your father. We hauled it up just back of the barn, an' you'll find it there."

Then the dory's bow grated on the sand, and from that moment until the goods had been carried to the farm-house but little conversation was indulged in.

The Seaview lads were introduced to Mr. and Mrs. Downs, much to their satisfaction. The head of the family was a kindly-faced man of perhaps fifty years, and his wife one of those motherly, bustling women who was evidently a good housewife, if one could judge from the cleanliness of the kitchen into which the boys had been ushered.

"So you've come out here to help me raise silver foxes, eh?" Mr. Downs asked with a laugh that was more like a gurgle of water in a long necked vessel than anything betokening merriment. "An' what's all this truck you've brought? Some new-fangled idee for the feedin' of the animals?"

"These fellows say they're goin' to stick up a couple of spars, an' twist all this truck 'round 'em, with a shanty somewhere near at hand, an' then they allow it will be possible to send word from here to Seaview just on the air," Sam said with a boisterous laugh, and his

father gurgled until one might have fancied, from the crimson hue which overspread his face, that he was in danger of choking.

"Mercy on us, father! What on earth does Sam mean?" Mrs. Downs asked placidly as she looked over the top of her spectacles.

"Just what I said, ma'am," the lad added, laughing boisterously. "They've been tryin' to stuff us with that kind of a yarn ever since we met 'em down at the cove."

"Sho! Sho, Sammy! Don't try to be pokin' fun at the village lads, 'cause likely enough they mean well. You never can tell what queer idees get inter some folks's minds, an' if they want'er play with this 'ere lot of wire an' stuff, I don't know what's to hinder 'em. Barren island's big enough for all kinds of contraptions, providin' Mr. Simpson is willin' to take the chances of disturbin' his foxes. An' that reminds me, son," the old gentleman continued as he turned toward Paul, "when are them 'ere animiles goin' to be landed here?"

"I can't say, sir; but father believed they would arrive very soon. We boys must do a lot of work before we can get the wireless in running order, and it's to be done before they come, for it is true that we count on sending messages from here to Seaview, as Sam says, on nothing but air."

"Sho now! Are you goin' to try to fool the old man same's you have the boys? Wa'al, wa'al, go ahead, lads; have your own way, seein's how your father seems to have fallen inter the same line of idees that you've got. Go ahead, turn us upside down if you

will; but remember mother is countin' on your showin' up here for dinner at twelve o'clock sharp, an' supper will be ready 'long about sundown."

There was no good reason why the boys should linger in the house. They were eager to get about their work, in order that there might be no question of completing it before the end of Ned's short vacation, and, after urging Sam and Ernest to get the spars at once, set off to make a selection of the site for the station.

Barren island is perhaps three miles long, and a mile, or a mile and a quarter, in width. It is a narrow strip of reef, with soil to the depth of four or five feet, and runs almost due north and south. About two-thirds of the island stands high, say thirty or forty feet above the level of the sea, and is quite thickly wooded, while the two ends run with a gentle slope down to the water. The northerly point is cleft, or, as Mr. Downs expressed it, is "swallow-tailed," forming a long, narrow cove which, under certain conditions of the weather, makes a snug harbor for small craft; but when the wind comes from the north or east with any force, the surf is so heavy that it becomes impossible to effect a landing. The southerly end tapers off into a reef which extends an hundred feet or more from the land, and, therefore, cannot be approached closely by any kind of a vessel.

Mr. Downs's house is situated on the west side, nearly in the middle of the island, and within two hundred feet of the shore. The out-buildings extend back nearly to the timbered section, which makes effective screen against the heavy northerly and easterly winds,

and directly in front of the dwelling is the cove where the Hampton boat came to anchor, forming really the only safe harbor to be found on that narrow strip of land.

As a matter of course Paul and Ned were eager to locate their station on the highest part of the island; but were forced to take due heed to the neighborhood of trees, lest the sound waves should be interrupted, and therefore it was that they finally decided upon a spot five hundred feet or more from the most northerly point, and less than sixty yards from the shore end of the "swallow-tailed" cove.

There was no need they should spend any time in deciding upon the general arrangements, for it was to be an exact duplicate of the station near Ned's home, and Paul suggested that while waiting for the Downs boys to fell the trees and work them into shape, he and his comrade begin the erection of a shanty.

"It will take those fellows from now until night to find a couple of trees, unless they know exactly where to go after them, and they must work lively with their axes if the two spars are ready for us by to-morrow night, therefore we shall be saving just so much time if we get the shanty up," Paul said, and at that moment the sound of a horn lustily blown gave token that the dinner hour was come.

Sam and Ernest were ready and waiting for the meal when the village boys entered the dwelling, and quite as incredulous concerning wireless telegraphy as when the matter was first made known to them.

"Have you been sending word to Seaview that

you've struck here?" Sam asked with a laugh, and Paul, thinking it was quite time to put an end to the lad's sport, said boldly:

"Now see here! We won't have any more talk about our being able to send messages on air. You keep right about the work which we have laid out, and when everything is done it will be possible for you to see that we haven't been trying to make fools of you. What about the trees?"

"We've marked a couple that'll run fifty feet anyhow. We'll take 'em down in no time after dinner, an' father allows he'll help trim 'em into shape, so's they can be ready for settin' by this time to-morrow," Ernest announced, and then Mrs. Downs interrupted the conversation by suggesting that they "hurry up with their feedin' so's the dishes could be washed before sundown."

"We allers feel like askin' the Almighty to have an eye out on us, seein's we're so far from all the rest of the world," Mr. Downs said as if by way of apology before he gave thanks for the humble fare before them, and the lads from Seaview were not a little surprised because of the fervor with which this dweller on Barren island addressed his Maker.

During the meal, which was hurriedly eaten by the Downs family, as if time was very precious, the head of the house asked many questions concerning the scheme of making of Barren island a silver fox farm, and questioned quite sharply the possibility of a single pelt being worth as much as two hundred dollars.

"I don't know very much about father's plans, ex-

cept that he believes the foxes will be here very soon, and counts on making considerable money out of the venture, if we can prevent curious and dishonest persons from molesting them," Paul replied.

"I allow we can do all that, the boys an' me," Mr. Downs said in a confident tone. "Once the time comes that I can't keep my eye on this 'ere island to the extent of knowin' whether anybody lands or not, it's up to me to go an' mix with the folks ashore."

"But if the foxes breed, and it must be true that the fur is valuable otherwise father wouldn't have gone into the business so extensively, there will very likely be some disreputable persons who'll try to steal them, and it won't be any easy matter even for you and your two sons to keep watch over all the shore."

"There's quite an 'if' in that 'ere remark, sonny," Mr. Downs replied with gurgling laughter. "In the first place you've got to get the foxes here, an' if they are anything like the animiles we've got in this part of the country, it'll be quite a spell before any man can get hold of 'em, once they're let loose in the timber. An' then again, you've got to find people who'll believe a fox pelt is worth two hundred dollars. After all that's been done, we know just where anybody can get ashore here, an' where they can't. It ain't to be done at the southerly end, nor on the easterly side, so it's a case, as I told your father, of keepin' our eyes out on the harbor yonder, an' on Swallow-Tailed cove. That's about the size of it, an' if three of us ain't able to do that much, it's time we got a few children to help us. Now will you tell me what part of the business

you're countin' on runnin' with all them contraptions that are piled up there?" and the farmer motioned toward the goods which were stowed in one corner of the kitchen.

Then it was that Paul explained, as clearly as was possible, the purpose for which wireless telegraphy would be maintained, and concluded by saying:

"It may be that we shall never really need to send word to Seaview, and yet the time might come when it would be of great importance. Ned and I have a station at home where messages can be received. So far we have done very little in the way of sending, because so much power was needed. Now we have all that is required in a 4-horse oil engine."

"Wa'al, wa'al, I declare!" Mr. Downs exclaimed as he rubbed his chin reflectively. "I reckon there must be some little truth in the yarn, else your father wouldn't have fitted you out in such a fashion, an' that 'ere stuff most likely cost a power of money. The boys an' me will do all we can toward helpin' you along, an' Sam shan't poke any more fun at the business, ridiculous as it seems. Now then, if we are all filled up let's get to work."

If one should set down in detail all that was done on Barren island during the week which followed, it would be dull reading, and take up so much of space that the story of what wireless telegraphy did for Silver Fox Farm could not be told. Therefore it is that the reader must be content with a brief account of what was accomplished during those seven days.

The two spars were set in the ground to the depth of

four feet, with wire guys leading from either side of each to hold them securely. At the head of these spars was made fast a pulley and tackle, by which the antenna, or aerial, could be raised and lowered.

This aerial was of the type known as Lodge-Muirhead, nineteen feet in length, by six and one-half feet in width, and formed of copper wires on wooden rods, with a brace in the middle to keep the central wires stiff.

The shanty, or building, in which the operators could be screened from the weather was situated perhaps twenty feet south of the spars, and with the aerial wire entering the building through a thick tube of ebonite having a small rain-hood over it.

The remainder of the apparatus was, as has been said, that which is used in the Signal Corps of the United States Army, being set up in trunks which only required to be opened in order that everything be in readiness for working. Just outside the shanty, under a small boxlike hood, was the oil engine, and regarding the power needed for the sending of messages, the boys were forced to guess, believing they would not be warranted in attempting to work at a distance greater than a hundred miles. In the case of communication with Seaview, only twenty-two miles away, Paul decided that if they had three kilowatts, or, in other words, 4-horsepower, which would be equivalent to three thousand watts, it should be possible for them to accomplish all that might be required.

The shanty had not been carefully built, save with a view of making it serve as a screen against the rain,

and to shelter the operator from the strong winds which blow across Barren island with great violence at times. That it could also be used as a lookout station, panes of glass, twelve by twenty inches, had been set at many points, so that one might command a view of the entire northerly end, including Swallow-Tailed cove. Later, when it could be brought over from the mainland, Paul proposed to set up a small stove, and counted on building a bunk against the wall, so that if need arose he might spend his entire time there.

It was when all this was done, and the village lads had announced that the work had been completed, that Sam cried in a tone of irony:

"Now let's hear you talk to the folks over at Seaview?"

"But surely you don't count we can do it until Ned goes back," Paul said with a laugh. "And even then we must tune the two stations so that one will respond to the other."

"So you tune 'em up same's you do a fiddle, eh?" and Sam went into convulsions of mirth, while his father gurgled and grew red in the face, as if on the point of choking.

"Well, that's pretty nearly what we do count on doing," Paul replied. "You see, we don't expect to open communication with any other station than Ned's at Seaview, and after we shall tune the two apparatus so that the wave lengths are exact, you'll find that there will be no difficulty whatsoever in my talking with him whenever he is at his instrument; but it is necessary for him to be at home before that can be done."

"I allowed you'd have some trouble," Ernest said as he turned on his heel. "Accordin' to the story we heard when you first come ashore, it was only a question of gettin' this thing inter shape, an' then you'd show us; but now we've got to wait till you carry him back, an' after that it'll be somethin' else. I allow to be gray-headed before you do what you said could be done."

It was no longer possible for the island lads to fret Paul. He knew that his station was completed and in good shape, and Ned's would be shortly after they returned to the village to set up the second oil engine. Therefore he held his peace and immediately made ready to return to the mainland, for there was yet time to put the Hampton boat into Seaview and back before nightfall.

To Sam and Ernest this powerful motor boat was of more interest than anything in the way of wireless telegraphy could possibly be, and there was no tone of irony or mirth in their voices when they begged permission to go to the village.

"I'd like to run over to Seaview an' back once in a craft like that," Sam said in a tone of envy, and Paul replied without hesitation:

"You shall do it, and perhaps once there, after seeing that Ned has just such a station near his house as we have put up here, you will begin to believe there must be some little truth in our statements that it is possible to send a message on nothing but air."

The island boys were loud in their praise of the Hampton boat. She was so swift, and there was in her

movements such a sense of power as she breasted the waves, which they, accustomed to plying to and fro in their dories, were unfamiliar with, that she was a revelation in sea architecture to them.

They knew nothing whatsoever concerning wireless telegraphy. In fact, were totally skeptical as to its possibilities; but both were keenly alive to the beauty and strength of such a craft as they were then in, and for the first time since Paul and Ned had landed on Barren island, did the Downs boys begin to fancy there was a chance that these village lads might have in them more than had at first been shown.

"Goin' to keep her out at the island all summer, are you?" Sam asked eagerly, and added when Ned nodded in the affirmative:

"Say, will you show me how to run her?"

"Of course I will, and you shall take your first lesson now. All you need is to understand the working of the motor, so that it will be possible for you to find out what, if anything, may go wrong."

Then, while Ned steered, Paul gave a lesson in motors to the Downs boys, and much to their delight allowed them to care for the delicate, glistening machinery, which he watched, however, with jealous eyes. The lads paid no attention to the passage of time until the Hampton boat was run alongside the pier at Seaview.

"How long has it been since you came over here?" Ned asked when the craft was made fast, and Sam's face was gleaming with pride because he it was who had stopped the motor.

"Nigh on to a year, I reckon."

"Suppose you come up to town with me? I'll show you the other wireless station, and you can go into the stores. There isn't much to be seen here, but you'll find a good deal more than on Barren island."

"I reckon we'll stay right where we are," Ernest replied gravely. "This 'ere boat is enough for me, an' I get all kind'er mixed up when I go ashore, 'cause there are so many people and houses. How long are you goin' to stop, Paul?"

"Perhaps an hour."

"Then you'll find us right here when you come back, an' I reckon, if you don't make any objections, we'll get the hang of this 'ere motor before you come back."

"Go ahead," Paul replied laughingly. "Nose about as much as you please, only my advice is that you don't try to start her, for fear you'd have trouble in stopping."

"Don't you worry your head over our gettin' into any such a mess as that might be, 'cause we know our failin' an' ain't takin' any chances. Go on an' fix up your business, an' the sooner you're back the better, for I want to feel this 'ere boat under my feet once more."

It so chanced that Paul did not return as soon as he had expected. When he met his father, it was to learn that the silver foxes had arrived the day previous, and Mr. Simpson proposed that they be carried to the island at once.

The animals were confined in iron-lined, wooden

cases, with no other apertures than was necessary to admit of their being fed; but Paul could get a glimpse now and then of the blue-black, silvery fur as the foxes moved restlessly about whenever any one approached their prisons.

"You told me the Downs boys were here with you?" Mr. Simpson said inquiringly, after Paul had satisfied his curiosity regarding the rare, fur-bearing animals. "I am going to trust you lads to take these foxes over to the island. Just before nightfall will be a good time to set them at liberty. You are to remember how valuable they are, and take every precaution against an accident."

It would have pleased Paul better had his father attended to the transhipping of the foxes, yet he was not a little proud because of being entrusted with such work.

In order that the Hampton boat might make the voyage before nightfall, the cages were carted at once to the pier, and there stowed on board the craft in such a manner that even though the sea should run high, there would be little danger of water coming up on the boxes. After all this had been done, Mr. Simpson once more urged upon his son the necessity of caution in the task of liberating the prisoners.

"Be careful not to move them too roughly when you take the cages ashore, and have all six carried up to the timber-land before you begin to liberate them. Then strive to let them out at nearly the same moment. They have been many weeks cramped up in that narrow space, and must by this time be so terrified and

wild that unless they can see their mates it is possible mischief may come of it."

"After we have let them out, what is to be done, sir?" Sam asked.

"Nothing for the first twenty-four hours; then throw a few fish around near the spring in the woods, and do not go into the timber except to carry such food. From the moment you have landed a sharp lookout must be kept lest strangers come on to the island."

"But don't you want us to make certain the foxes are all right?" Ernest asked in surprise.

"Leave them strictly alone. Each night for a week you are to carry fish in to them; but see to it that no one of you goes among the timber."

"That's plain enough," Sam said with a laugh. "I reckon we can raise silver foxes on Barren island even if we don't make such a howlin' success of that 'ere wireless contrivance, as you call it, though 'cordin' to all I've seen, one scheme's got as much sense in it as the other."

"So your station is in working order?" Mr. Simpson asked Paul.

"It will be by to-morrow noon, when we have put it in tune with Ned's apparatus."

"As soon as you can communicate, let me know how you succeeded in setting the foxes free," Mr. Simpson said in a businesslike tone which caused Sam and Ernest to look curiously at each other, for they began to understand that their employer had quite as much faith in the possibility of sending messages on air as had his son.

Then the Hampton boat was backed out from the dock, Ned shouted his farewells, coupled with the announcement that if it should be possible for him to earn another holiday by extra study, he would come over in the old dory for a short visit.

Mr. Simpson again warned them as to care in handling the foxes, and the return voyage was begun.

CHAPTER III

FREEING THE FOXES

Sam and Ernest devoted less care to the Hampton boat during the return trip than had been previously bestowed upon her. The fact that the silver foxes were on board excited them not a little, for until this moment the scheme of the fox farm had seemed to them as intangible as the possibility of sending messages on air.

Now, however, the animals were in their keeping. There could no longer be any question as to Mr. Simpson's power to carry out his purpose, and quite naturally the first question in the minds of all on board the Hampton boat was as to whether the venture would be a paying one.

Sam and Ernest were of the opinion that Mr. Simpson had made a grievous mistake when he declared that a first-class pelt of the silver fox was worth not less than two hundred dollars, and might bring a much larger price, according to the condition of the market. They had only in mind the native fox, and were slow to believe that the animal they knew so well could have a cousin whose hide was valued at so much money.

"My father would not go into this business until he knew all about it," Paul said stoutly while the Hampton boat was racing swiftly and steadily across the curling waves. "It is not likely he would pay seven

hundred dollars for two animals unless their pelts were of great value."

"Seven hundred dollars!" Sam repeated incredulously, and Ernest gazed at Paul as if believing the lad had made some mistake in the amount. "Do you mean to tell me he paid seven hundred dollars for two foxes?"

"That's what each pair cost him, and before they breed he will have spent twice the amount of money that these animals represent."

"Wa'al," Sam cried in a tone of conviction, "all I can say is that your father must be easy, if he puts up so much money for six measly foxes. I thought he was kind'er out of his head when he hired father and us boys to look after 'em, an' then I counted he was gettin' the foxes for nothin'; but seven hundred for two! Talk about a fool an' his money!"

"You'll sing a different tune if these fellows breed, and he begins to sell the pelts at a big price," Paul said hotly, for he was not pleased to hear his father's plans derided.

"Yes, I reckon I shall," and Sam turned his attention once more to the helm. "But I'm allowin' it'll be a good deal with the foxes as it is with that scheme of yours. There'll allers be somethin' to prevent it from goin' through smoothlike."

"Why, hasn't that scheme of mine gone through all right?" Paul asked in surprise.

"I don't make out as it has," and Sam turned quickly as if believing now had come the time to prove that the statements made by Paul and Ned were false.

"You allowed to send word over to Seaview as soon as that 'ere lot of wire an' poles were put up, an' what about it? You say it wants tunin'! Now when you talk to me about tunin' a bird cage like the one you've got strung up, why I say it's carryin' the thing a little too far, same's I say when your father tells 'bout gettin' two hundred dollars for a fox's pelt."

"We won't talk about it, Sam," Ernest said, laying a hand on his brother's shoulder as if to remind the lad that he was lacking in respect to his employer and his employer's son. "If Mr. Simpson wants to pay out seven hundred dollars for a pair of wooden chickens. what business is it of ours, an' if Paul an' his friend are willin' to spend a week makin' guys of themselves, it's nothin' to us, so long's they pay for it."

"That's just it," Paul added emphatically. "You two and your father are hired to look after the island, meaning the foxes and the wireless station, and you'll get your wages just the same whether both schemes go to smash or not. But mark my words, before this summer has come to an end you will realize that that bird cage of mine is something mighty big."

Sam made no reply, probably because he realized that it was not well for him to speak of what was being done on Barren island in tones of derision, and Paul remained silent owing to being nettled at the boys' remarks. Ernest could not well carry on a conversation with himself, and, going forward, he stretched out at full length on the hood which covered the boat's bow, watching with sailorly eyes the little craft as she cut

through the curling waves, throwing the water either side into flecks of foam.

Because of the time spent in putting the foxes aboard, Paul remained longer in Seaview than had been his intention, and now, with the return voyage no more than half made, the sun had sunk behind the hills on the mainland, while the gray twilight was rapidly deepening into blackness.

"We ought not have stayed so long," he said, breaking the silence which had continued for ten or fifteen minutes. "It was our duty to get there before dark."

"What difference does it make?" Sam asked carelessly. "I can put this 'ere craft inter the cove an' anchor her as well in the darkest night you ever saw, as when the sun is shinin'."

"But I was thinking of the work to be done after we get there."

"You mean settin' the foxes free? There's nothing to trouble you in that, 'cause your father allowed it would be better for us to turn 'em out in the night, an' I'm reckonin' they'll find it black enough among the timber by the time we get 'em up there. Hello! What's that craft ahead? It looks like John Ed Bingham's dory."

"Who's he?" Paul asked, straining his eyes into the gloom to make out that of which the lad had spoken.

"Wa'al, he's— I s'pose he calls himself a fisherman; but 'cordin' to my way of thinkin' he's most anythin' when there's a dollar to be made. Folks do say that he's smuggled a pile of rum from down Campobello

way in his day, an' I reckon there's considerable truth in it."

"Where does he live?"

"Down on the coast fifteen or twenty miles—perhaps more."

"It's strange I never saw him at Seaview," Paul said half to himself, and a certain feeling of anxiety came over him, although he could not have said why he should be disturbed because this fisherman, smuggler, or whatever he might be called, chanced to be in their course just then.

"Wa'al, I allow John Ed don't count on showin' himself any too much, especially over your way, where Captain Tobi Thompson might make trouble for him."

"What has he done to Captain Tobi?"

"Wa'al, the way I've heard the story is that six or seven years ago he bought Captain Tobi's sloop Zoe; paid ten dollars on the nail, an' 'greed to come up with the balance as soon as he could get down to Quoddy Head and back. He's never got back yet, I reckon, an' what surprises me is that a man as close-fisted as Captain Tobi should ever have let the sloop go without gettin' the cash right in his fist."

While one might have counted ten Paul remained silent, and then, unduly anxious because of the cargo, and understanding how much of mischief might be done if the foxes were disturbed shortly after they had been set free, he asked sharply:

"What's the man doing out here in the night? He can't be fishing?"

"It would take a wiser head than I've got to an-

swer that question," Sam replied with a laugh. "Why, anybody who knows John Ed wouldn't be surprised to find him standin' right up a cabbage patch at midnight, any more than they'd be to see him knockin' 'round in that dory of his while a nor'easter was tunin' up at the rate of fifty miles an hour. You can set it down, though, that he has got something in his mind with a dollar tailin' to the end of it."

"Does he ever come to Barren island?"

"Yes, pokes his nose in there once in a while; but father ain't stuck on him. He says if he had a ten-ton anchor on the beach an John Ed happened along, he should feel as though it was his duty to bolt the iron right down on the ledge, else he'd lose it. There's Capt'in Willard of the Eliza Ann, he vows an' declares that one night when he was layin' off Monhegan John Ed got away with all his fore-rigging. But then, that ain't so much of a yarn when you come to consider what wild ones Capt'in Willard can spin."

By this time Paul could make out with reasonable distinctness a weather-worn dory in which was a single occupant, who was resting on his oars directly in the Hampton boat's course.

"It looks as if John Ed was waitin' for us," Ernest cried as he rose to a sitting posture. "It wouldn't s'prise me if the old scoundrel wanted a tow. My! but won't mother look black when she sees him turn up at the house for a night's lodgin'!"

"That's what he can't be allowed to do," Paul said sternly. "My father's orders are that no one shall land on Barren island without his permission while the

foxes are there, and surely we won't disobey him at the very start."

"But what will you do if John Ed wants a tow?" Ernest asked, and Paul replied promptly:

"Tell him he can't have it."

"All right; but I'm allowin' you'll have to do the talkin'. I haven't got any love for John Ed; but at the same time don't hanker after makin' an enemy of him."

"Are you afraid of a man whom you admit is dishonest?"

"Well, I won't say exactly that; but I ain't tumblin' over myself to get his ill will."

"It doesn't seem to me as if he could be very dangerous," and Paul forced himself to laugh, but there was nothing of mirth in his tones.

"That's 'cordin' to how you look at things," Sam said, and now he spoke in a serious tone. "Nobody can prove that John Ed ever did anythin' very wrong, except so far as smugglin' rum is concerned; but them as he's turned against have had a pile of trouble one way or another, an' he gets all the credit of it."

There was no further opportunity for conversation of a private nature, for the power boat had drawn so near the battered dory that the idle oarsman might have overheard that which was said regarding him.

"Swing ever so little to port, so that we shan't go too near him, and I'll answer his questions if he asks any," Paul said in a low tone as he increased the speed of the motor, and a few moments later came the hail:

"Ahoy on the power boat!"

"Ahoy!" Paul shouted.

"Hold up a bit."

"What for?"

"Bound for Barren island, ain't you?"

"Yes."

"Well, I want a tow."

"You can't have it; we're in a hurry."

"What's that you say?"

Paul made no reply, and the Hampton boat dashed on, throwing the spray over her bow to the discomfiture of Ernest, as if she, like Paul, was eager to put a greater distance between herself and the fisherman-smuggler.

Glancing back ever so slightly over his shoulder, Paul could see the man standing erect in his dory gazing toward the Hampton boat as if too much astonished to admit of his speaking, and then, in an instant, anger took the place of surprise, when he burst into a torrent of rage.

"Won't give me a tow, eh?" Won't make my line fast when it wouldn't cost you half a minute's time? Think I don't know you, eh? Got an idee I ain't up to Ben Simpson's fool trick of startin' a fox farm? Leave an old man way off here in the night pullin' his arms out when you might'er helped him into port? If you don't rue this night's work my name ain't John Ed Bingham."

The angry man could be seen standing in his dory gesticulating wildly even when the Hampton boat was so far away that it was impossible to hear his words, and Sam Downs said in a half whisper, as if afraid to speak aloud:

"You can count on it, Paul, that he'll keep his word if ever the chance comes. He's heard 'bout turnin' Barren island inter a fox farm, an' was countin' on seein' what had been done. Now you've shut down hard on him, an' he'll know what them 'ere foxes look like before next fall, or I'll eat my head."

"If he does, then your father, and your brother, and you will have neglected your duty," Paul cried angrily, and striving to prevent the vague fear in his heart from being betrayed by his voice. "All of you have insisted that it will be possible to prevent any person from landing, and at the very first threat an old reprobate makes, you allow that he can come on the island whenever he pleases."

"I don't allow anythin' of the kind," was the heated retort. "We can keep the general run of folks from makin' a landin' on the island, but when it comes to one like John Ed Bingham, we're apt to be downed."

"Is he so much different from other men that you can't guard the place against him?"

"Wait till you know him better, then there won't be any need of my answerin' the question," Sam replied sulkily, and with a shrug of the shoulders as if he was not inclined to continue the conversation.

Now really there was no reason why Paul should feel disturbed in mind because of having refused this John Ed Bingham, smuggler or fisherman, a tow to Barren island, and yet such was the case. He had done no more than obey his father's oft-repeated commands, by refusing to take the man on forbidden ground, and yet he could not prevent a certain undefined fear that

because of such refusal he had worked in some way, he could not have explained how, an injury to the silver fox experiment.

"I had to do it," he muttered to himself, as if trying to apologize for performing his duty. "Of course I can't prevent him from following us; but it will be easier to keep him off the island than to have sent him away after I had deliberately carried him there."

By dint of dwelling upon the matter, and straining his imagination in the effort to fancy what harm John Ed Bingham might do, Paul succeeded in working himself into a very unenviable frame of mind, and when they had come so near their destination that Sam warned him to be ready to stop the motor because of being well into the harbor, he looked furtively over either shoulder as if expecting that the old smuggler might be close aboard.

"Stop her!" Sam shouted. "Let go the killock, Ernest!" and as the boat's way was checked until she swung to her cable, Master Downs said in a tone of triumph:

"Talk 'bout runnin' a boat in the night! Why I'll eat my head, an' yours, too, if she don't lay within three fathom of where she did last week. Now what about your bloomin' foxes?"

"They must be taken ashore at once, as a matter of course, and then got up into the woods in some way," Paul replied decidedly, and thanks to the fact that it was necessary he take charge of unlading the valuable cargo, the lad momentarily forgot the fears which had been aroused by the threats of John Ed.

"We can do the last part of it easier than the first, 'cause father'll hook the steers to the hay-rick, and we'll have the foxes up there in a jiffy. It's gettin' 'em ashore that's botherin' me."

"We'll put two boxes in the dory," Ernest said as he unmoored the craft which had been left behind at the anchorage when the Hampton boat was sent off toward the mainland. "You an' I, Sam, will both go ashore, take out the two cages, an' then while I'm runnin' up to the house for father an' the steers, you can get back after another load, with Paul to help you handle it."

That this was the most expeditious method of performing the task the lad from Seaview understood at once, and without further word two of the cages were taken gingerly over the rail and deposited on the bottom of the dory, care being had to avoid rough handling lest the animals be yet further excited.

Then the two Downs boys pulled shoreward, being speedily lost to view in the gloom, and Paul set about covering the motor to protect it from the salt air as well as the rain, but pausing every few seconds to stare into the blackness seaward as if expecting to hear or see the man whom he was beginning to fear without any due cause therefor.

"I am a fool," he muttered to himself when the task was completed and he stood for at least the tenth time gazing into the gloom. "I am a fool!" Then he started suddenly, throwing up one arm as if to ward off a blow, for at that instant a heavy thump against the side of the Hampton boat was felt, and just for an in-

stant he failed to realize that it betokened the return of Sam with the dory.

"Wa'al, we left the boxes on the beach where father an' the steers can get at 'em, an' now let's set a couple more ashore. I forgot to tell Ernest he must bring some axes, so's we can open the cages; but I reckon he'll have sense enough to remember it."

A second cargo was made ready, and this time Paul took passage in the light craft that he might assist in the unloading. The third trip was soon made, and the last two of the six animals were lodged safely on Barren island. It only remained to set them at liberty as Mr. Simpson had commanded, and then would begin the watch against intruders, which must be continued for many and many a weary day and night, until the visitors from Russia had become accustomed to their new home.

The creaking of wheels, or axles that were strangers to oil, was heard very shortly after Paul and Sam had finished their portion of the work, and then came the cheery hail of Mr. Downs even before his slowly moving steeds could be distinguished in the darkness.

"Well, Paul, got back safe an' sound, have you, bringin' the foxes along, too? Wa'al, I don't know 'bout this 'ere scheme of goin' into farmin' for pelts, an' I kind'er mistrusted that we'd never see these 'ere animiles. It seemed to me all of a piece with that 'ere contraption of yours over at Swallow-Tailed cove—more fuss than fact. Howsomever, when we can get that 'ere lot of stuff to talkin' with them as are in Seaview, I'll believe fox farmin' is a payin' trade."

PAUL HAD THE SATISFACTION OF SEEING THREE SMALL SLEEK FORMS DART FROM THEIR PRISONS

It required no little time, and some considerable skill, for Mr. Downs to get his team of steers straightened around on the beach and headed for the woods. Then the cages were taken up carefully one by one and placed on the bottom of the hay wagon, the farmer handling them as one might some dangerous explosive which the slightest concussion would set off, as he muttered half to himself:

"I don't allow as the usual run of foxes can be very dangerous animiles, but these 'ere Rushian creeters must be different from what I've seen, an' if we don't have a tussle for our lives before mornin' it'll be God's blessin'."

"They won't hurt you, Mr. Downs, else father would have told us to have a care; but he is anxious that we shall let them all out at the same time, if possible."

"I ain't so certain how that can be done. I've got a couple of crowbars an' two axes here; but with only four of us, it don't stand to reason we're goin' to handle six of these 'ere cages at the same minute. How about settin' 'em free three at a time?"

It was evident to Paul that they could do no more than that, and as the slowly moving steers started up the incline with their light load, tugging and straining at the yoke as if heavily burdened, the lad cast about in his mind as to how even three of the cages might be opened at the same moment, forgetting for the time being the threats made by John Ed Bingham.

The lad from Seaview need not have exerted himself laying plans, for once they were arrived at the edge of the woods Mr. Downs took charge of the work by or-

dering that three of the cages be placed on the ground, and saying as he seized the crowbar after this had been done:

"I'm allowin' that I'm good for one of these 'ere contraptions, even if it is tied up tight with sheet iron. Now if you three boys can't manage the other two, I'll get your mother to come down an' do the job alone."

It was not as simple a matter to free the animals as Mr. Downs had anticipated. The cages were of thick oaken boards, lined inside with sheet iron, and strapped at the ends with bands of the same material, which last must be wrenched off before any headway could be made toward removing as many of the bars as would permit of the fox crawling through.

The task was performed finally, however, after much grumbling on the part of Mr. Downs because "them Rushians had nailed the cages up so strong," and Paul had the satisfaction of seeing three small, sleek forms dart from their prisons, disappearing so quickly amid the foliage that one might well question whether he had even caught a glimpse of them.

The other three cages were treated in the same manner; but the sixth fox was a full minute behind his fellow-prisoners, and stood, while one might have counted ten, as if undecided which way to turn.

Then, like a shadow, he glided off very nearly in the same direction as that taken by the others, and Farmer Downs said with a deep-drawn sigh of relief, as he wiped the perspiration from his forehead with a not overly clean shirt-sleeve:

"I vow to goodness if I ain't glad that 'ere job's finished! I never allowed it would take me so long to set six measly foxes loose! Talk about them 'ere heathen Rushians not knowin' their noses from six dollars a month! I'd like to see the man that could beat 'em cagin' animiles! I'll bite my ear if an elephant couldn't have danced a hornpipe on them 'ere boxes, an' not smashed 'em, an' all that work for the sake of a fox!"

"But the six of 'em, 'cordin' to what Paul says, are worth more'n this whole island, father," Sam cried. "What do you say to payin' seven hundred dollars for two?"

"Seven— Did you say seven, sonny? Seven hundred—dollars—for two?"

"That's what Paul allows, an' there are six of 'em. Three hundred and fifty apiece! Now what do you think of silver fox farmin'?"

"Wa'al, I ain't goin' agin my own bread and butter, an' that's jest what this 'ere truck means to us. But I allow that I've got the right to say it's the craziest kind of nonsense."

"What about supper?" Ernest interrupted, understanding by Paul's movements that he was not well pleased at such criticism.

"I'm allowin' it'll be waitin' for us, an' smokin' hot, when we get back an' put up the steers. You toddle right down to the house, Paul, an' we'll see to what chores have been left over."

"I don't care for anything to eat," the lad from Seaview replied nervously, for now that the work of lib-

erating the foxes had been accomplished with apparent success, his thoughts had gone back to the man in the dory. "I've got some work to do over at the wireless station, and it may be quite a while before it's finished."

"Come, come sonny, you mustn't lose your appetite," Mr. Downs cried soothingly. "There's nothing like six or eight slices of fried pork, with as much fresh fish as you can heap on your plate, after a hard day's work, an' I reckon you've put in a full tally since morning."

"I'm going over to the station. You needn't wait supper for me," Paul said quietly, and Sam asked, with no intention of casting discredit upon the work, although to Paul's ears his tone was one of mirth:

"Goin' to tune up, eh?"

"That's what I am, and before I come back, if Ned is waiting for me, I'll get word to father of our meeting with John Ed Bingham."

"So! You run across the old villain, did you? What's your father got to do with it?" and Mr. Downs allowed the steers to go on at their own sweet will while he turned to face Paul.

"The man threatened a good deal because we wouldn't give him a tow, and it's just as well father should know that he may do a mischief."

"Wa'al, I declare if I hadn't rather give a good bit than to have had you come at cross ends with John Ed!" Mr. Downs exclaimed in a tone of regret. "Of course I don't allow that I'm in any ways afraid of him; but he ain't the kind of a man I'd like to have get a grudge agin me. Tell me just how it happened?

I should have thought you'd known better than to rough him up, Sam."

"I didn't have anythin' to do with it, father. Paul, he allowed that we wouldn't give him a tow, an' he run the whole business."

Then Sam told the story in detail, and Mr. Downs said half to himself as he rubbed his chin with the brad in the end of the gourd-stick:

"Now I allow it's kind'er unfortunate, runnin' agin John Ed in that way, though I don't jest see how you could have done different. Your father allows that nobody is to land here, an' of all men in the world John Ed would be the worst to come foolin' 'round where them 'ere seven hundred dollar foxes are. I've agreed to keep 'em safe an' sound; but I declare to goodness if it don't seem that I might fail in my duty if John Ed's got an eye out, an' it 'pears he has, 'cordin' to what he said. Hey, Ernest, you run after them 'ere steers, or nobody knows where they'll get to! I didn't allow that we'd have to begin watchin' very soon; but it seems, 'cordin' to what's happened, that we're bound to get on to our job this very night, an' the sooner we tackle that pork an' fish the quicker we'll be ready for it."

Then Mr. Downs hurried on in pursuit of the steers, Ernest and Sam following close at his heels, while Paul set off directly toward the wireless station, giving no heed to the shouts of the male members of the Downs family as they urged upon him the necessity of "fillin' up" before "fiddlin' with them 'ere wires."

CHAPTER IV

THE FIRST MESSAGE

Of course it was all very foolish, but for the time being it seemed to Paul as if the Downs family was united against him in favor of John Ed Bingham, and, as he hastened across the island in the direction of the wireless station, that he was much the same as alone in the struggle against the smuggler-fisherman.

"It looks as if every member of the Downs family had decided some time since that that miserable old man can do about as he pleases, and I can't quite understand the matter. They don't hesitate to call him a scoundrel, a smuggler, and such like pet names, yet are apparently frightened out of their wits because I wasn't willing to bring him to this island in direct opposition to father's orders. What a fool I was, not to have asked Ned to stay at his instrument until he either heard from me, or became satisfied that something was wrong with the apparatus! Now I may spend the entire night calling him, and he in bed and asleep all the time!"

His surroundings were not calculated to soothe the lad who had grown nervous because of what the male members of the Downs family had said relative to John Ed Bingham. The night was so dark that he could not even see the ground beneath his feet; but was forced to make his way by the sense of touch, so to speak, and the warm air seemed stifling. The hoarse roaring of

the surf at the mouth of Swallow-Tailed cove sounded threatening, and the moaning of the breeze through the trees came to his ears like a note of warning.

"This won't do," he cried aloud, coming to a sudden halt. "I've got to stay on the island all summer, and if I begin by being scared nearly out of my wits before the first night of duty has well begun, father's foxes will come to grief. There is no sense in my getting so shivery simply because a miserable old smuggler threatened to work what harm he could. I must brace up if I count on attending to business properly."

It was as if this one-sided conversation with himself had revived his courage, for straightway he continued the tramp, walking with a firmer step, and resolutely shutting out from his ears the noises of the sea and the night.

He was startled, however, when he came suddenly upon the work of his own hands. The spars stood out against the lighter darkness of the sky much like a gallows, and the sighing of the wind among the wires of the antenna made most ghostly music. His hands trembled as he opened the door of the shanty; but he had a firmer grip upon himself once the wick of the lantern was aflame, and he saw the instruments as he had left them a few hours previous.

"Now we'll see whether I know anything about wireless telegraphy, or if it is in my hands only a toy, such as the Downs family believe it to be," he said in a loud tone, and the sound of his own voice did much toward dispelling the cobwebs that fear had spun in his brain.

The first step was to start the motor, in order that he might be prepared in case it so chanced that Ned was at his station striving to get into communication with Barren island. Then, calling to mind all he had heard and read regarding the tuning of two stations to the corresponding wave lengths, he set about the work, forgetting, in his eagerness to begin the real work of telegraphing, all the fears which had been excited by the old smuggler's threats.

Paul and Ned had discussed this matter of tuning the two stations in sympathy with each other, many times while they were installing the apparatus, and Paul knew, or believed he did, exactly what his friend had done immediately after arriving home. It had also been arranged between the two lads that the "call" for the island station should be p-l, while that for Seaview was to be n-d.

In less than half an hour from the time of entering the shanty Paul was ready to make the first trial of his apparatus, and he began making the letters n-d with the key, only to start back with a cry of dismay, for a torrent of sparks followed the first movement.

"Now what is wrong?" he exclaimed, and for an instant he was tempted to abandon the effort, believing that his knowledge of wireless telegraphy was too slight to permit of running a station. Then he shut his teeth hard, and went over in mind all that he had read regarding this disagreeable and erratic crackling.

An instant later he was at work upon the coherer, and when next the key was raised he felt confident he was sending out wave-sounds in the proper order.

"There's no use for a fellow to give in beaten until he has tried every remedy at hand," he said in a tone of satisfaction, and after repeating the call eight or nine times, he switched off the sending apparatus to that of the receiving, in order to learn if his signal had been heard.

Counting ten slowly, and getting no reply in that time, he switched the apparatus back again, and redoubled the number of calls before waiting for a reply.

This manœuver was repeated again and again until a full half hour had been spent, and Paul was in despair. There seemed to be no question but that Ned had gone to bed at the regular hour, instead of waiting to get some word from his friend, and the lad said bitterly:

"It seems as if he might have waited a little while on this first night, more particularly since he must know that father is eager to learn if the foxes were set loose without any mishap. But what's the sense in giving up? I may as well spend the time here calling n-d, as to go over to the farm-house, where I wouldn't be able to get any sleep, for my eyes have been propped wide open by that scoundrelly smuggler."

At that instant the opening of the shanty door caused him to spring up in what was very nearly alarm, for he had not been expecting a visitor, and as he looked quickly around an expression of annoyance came over his face because this late comer was Sam Downs.

"Seein's how I'm bound to tramp 'round the shore of this 'ere island till midnight, when Ernest comes on

duty, I allowed it wouldn't do any great harm if I visited with you a spell."

"It will be all right if you don't neglect guard duty," Paul replied curtly. "The orders are to move about during night, on the watch for mischief-makers, and you can't keep a very strict lookout if you are in this shanty."

"I ain't countin' on stoppin' more'n a shake. Ma'rm wanted me to tell you that she'd left your supper in the stove oven, agin you was hungry when you went home. It allers mixes her up pretty considerable if one of us acts peckish at the table, an' your stayin' away altogether kind'er upset her."

"She mustn't worry if I fail to eat as much as either you or Ernest. I'm not doing hard work, and don't stand in need of a great deal in the way of food," Paul replied as he faced the telegraph key once more, hoping most fervently that his visitor would take the hint and get about his guard duty.

"I reckon you're kinder tunin' the fiddle up, eh?"

"Yes, something of that kind."

"Been talkin' with the folks over to Seaview?" Sam asked with a hearty laugh, as if he had uttered the choicest joke.

"I'm getting ready to now," and Paul began calling n-d once more; but without any expectation of receiving a reply.

Sam stood near his elbow in open-mouthed astonishment, starting back in fear as the irregular action of the coherer admitted of a stream of sparks, and leaping toward the door of the shanty when, after the

receiving apparatus had been switched on, a crackling and snapping could be heard in such volume that the tiny apartment actually seemed to tremble under the detonations.

"Hurrah! hurrah!" Paul shouted in glee as he inserted the vibrating contacts in the circuit to break up the continuous current. "Ned staid right on duty like a dear boy; but I can't understand why he didn't answer me before."

"Say, is that the reg'lar kind of a noise this 'ere thing makes when you're sendin' words on nothin' but air?" Sam asked timidly as he stood half in and half out of the door, ready to take flight at the next indication of danger.

"You can't tell what may happen when the current comes with too great force," Paul replied curtly. "The safest place at such a time as this is outside, where you can keep watch of the shore."

"I reckon it won't do any great harm if I look at you a spell longer," the island lad said with a grin. "I allow it'll be possible for me to stand it if you can. Wind her up once more, an' let's have another Fourth-of-July racket."

Paul no longer gave heed to his unwelcome visitor. The dots and dashes were coming steadily now, and with a sensation of deepest relief he read in the characters of the Morse alphabet:

"Your father has been waiting here nearly an hour, to hear how you got on with the foxes."

"We set them free without any mishap. One was left behind by its mates for a few seconds; but he soon

scuttled away in the same direction they had taken. Ask father if he ever heard of a smuggler or a fisherman named John Ed Bingham?" Paul telegraphed, convinced by this time that, save in the case of some accident that had not been foreseen, communication was finally established with Seaview, and mentally patting himself on the head because of having been so successful in the work at which he was only an amateur.

Then came the reply, Sam gradually approaching nearer the instruments until he stood directly behind the young operator:

"I know him as a man wholly without principle. Has he heard anything about the foxes?"

Paul had written the message out letter by letter as he received it, and Sam, who could not fail of reading the words, cried in a tone of astonishment:

"By the jumpin' Crickey! That thing does really work jest as you said it would, an' who'd ever believed it? Who sent them 'ere words?" and he pointed at the writing on the paper in front of Paul.

"My father. He is speaking of John Ed Bingham."

"Wa'al, I reckon he's got the old villain down fine. He must have run afoul of him, some time or another."

Paul gave no heed to this last remark. He was busily engaged in sending a brief account of what had occurred during the passage from Seaview, and when the story was at an end Ned clicked off the following order from Mr. Simpson:

"Tell Mr. Downs and his sons to keep their eyes

open wide. Bingham is not to be allowed to land on the island under any circumstances, and I shall hold them strictly accountable in case he succeeds in so doing. There is no question but that he will make the attempt, for it is safe to say he knows the value of silver foxes. You are to hold all hands well to their work, and see to it that at least two are on duty during all the hours of the night."

"Have you read that?" Paul asked as he looked up at Sam, and the latter replied with a grin:

"That's what I was doin'. Kinder looks as if your father knew John Ed mighty well, eh?"

"Well, having read it, why do you stay here in the shanty?" Paul asked sharply.

"What's your pucker in gettin' rid of me? I ain't troublin' you any, am I?"

"But father says two of you are to remain on duty throughout the night, and you're loafing here when that smuggler may be landing at this very moment. There's nothing to prevent him from doing as he chooses while you are off guard."

"Wa'al, say, you're gettin' mightily worked up over John Ed, ain't yer? An' you actin' bold as a lion when he wanted a tow. What's turned you 'round so sudden?"

"Can't you see what has turned me?" Paul cried angrily. "There is a message from your employer, insisting that you do your full duty, and yet you stand here talking nonsense. Wait until morning, if you have anything to say to me, but now go at once to rouse your brother. Take this written message with

you, that he and your father may see what is expected of them."

"How'll they know whether your father sent these words or not?" and Sam grinned in a manner that was particularly exasperating to Paul. "You might have cooked it up for the sake of makin' us think that this 'ere contraption could do sich business."

"It will be safe for you to believe that I'm telling the truth, for if two of you are not on duty within fifteen minutes, and doing your best at watching the shore, I shall send such a message to Seaview as will cause my father to come here before noon to-morrow."

Paul spoke with such a tone of authority that Sam shuffled away as rapidly as it was possible for him to move, saying sufficiently loud to be heard as he disappeared in the darkness:

"Some folks are mighty fussy over a lot of measly foxes. I'd like to know how two of us, or all hands, countin' in ma'rm, for that matter, could keep John Ed from landin' if so be he took it inter his head that Barren island was his port?"

"Your father agreed that it could be done, and my father will hold him to the promise, or there'll be another set of keepers here in short order," Paul shouted, and then he turned his attention to the apparatus once more, for the call p-l was sounding rapidly, as if Ned feared something had gone wrong.

"Where have you been?" Ned asked when Paul gave the signal that he was ready to receive a message.

"One of the Downs boys, who is supposed to be on guard until midnight, has been loafing in the shanty;

and it required considerable time and many words to make him return to duty," Paul replied by use of the key, and immediately came an additional order from his father:

"Make certain they keep a sharp lookout. Take a hand in the work yourself to-night, and if you are convinced that they are not carrying out my instructions, send word early to-morrow," and Ned added on his own account, "I'm sleepy enough to go to bed now; you'd better do the same. Will be ready for you between seven and eight in the morning."

"I can't go to bed, for I'm certain the Downs family are not attending to duty. Good-night."

"Good-night," came in reply, and Paul shut off the motor, after which he disconnected the instruments, shut the trunk in which was the delicate mechanism, locking it securely as a precaution against mischief on the part of any evil-disposed person who might succeed in effecting a landing.

There was no longer any personal fear of John Ed Bingham in the lad's mind, now that he had had communication with his father. He still believed the old smuggler would do harm to the foxes if it was within his power and any money was to be made by so doing; but that sense of undefinable fear had gone, and once more was he alert and quick-witted, all the cobwebs having been swept away from his brain.

When everything was in shape to be left for the night Paul went out into the darkness, leaving the lantern behind to the end that he might move about unseen, and, going well down on the rocky shore,

walked softly along, straining his eyes into the gloom, or listening for that sound which might tell of intruders.

Not until he had come to the cove in which the Hampton boat was moored, did he hear anything of those who were supposed to be keeping sharp watch, and then the sound of voices in the distance told that the Downs boys, having neglected their duties during this long interval, were approaching.

"What's the sense of two walkin' 'round all night?" Ernest was saying in a petulant tone. "One is as good as half a dozen, 'cause if John Ed reckons on landin' here he can't be stopped."

"The trouble of it is Paul will send word to his father that we ain't carryin' out the bargain 'cordin' to his fool idees, an' we may lose the job," Sam replied, and his brother said in a tone of conviction:

"You'll never make me believe that he can send word from here to Seaview on air. He's been stuffin' you, an' I'll bet my head the last word he heard from his father was when we put out from the dock with the foxes aboard."

"Anyhow, we've got to keep walkin', I reckon, if we count on earnin' wages."

"What's to hinder our crawlin' among the bushes up by the spring, an' havin' a snooze? He'll never know whether we've been takin' it easy or not, an' it's all nonsense for us to wear our lives out on sich a fool job as this."

Paul understood full well that now was the time when these lads must be made to understand that his

father's orders were to be obeyed to the letter, otherwise Silver Fox Farm would come to an untimely end. He would have preferred that some other should recall them to their duty; but it was so firmly impressed on his mind that the old smuggler would attempt to make a landing before daylight, that he did not dare to delay, therefore called sharply as he advanced rapidly in the direction of the idlers:

"The reason why you can't crawl in among the bushes near the spring is because father gave positive orders that we were not to go among the foliage, save once each day for the purpose of leaving food, and you may count it as certain that I shall know whether you attend to the duties of guarding this island, or deceive the man who pays you good wages."

"So you've been listenin', eh?" Ernest demanded in an angry tone.

"Any one half a mile at sea might have heard what you said, and if that smuggler of yours is really trying to work mischief to the foxes, he'd have had a good chance to slip past you."

"Wa'al, what business is it of yours whether we moon 'round this island, or take it kinder comfortable?" Ernest cried aggressively. "You ain't payin' us our wages."

"But I'm here to see that you earn them," Paul replied firmly, but in a friendly tone. "See here, boys, my father is spending a large amount of money in this scheme of raising silver foxes, and it is easy for you to turn the whole thing into disaster by neglecting to carry out his orders. I don't want to have any trouble

with you, or seem to act the part of fault-finder; but I have had orders to see that a strict watch is kept, as your father agreed should be done, and I'm going to obey them to the letter. It would have been possible for me to send word that Sam was loafing in the shanty instead of patroling the shore; but I didn't want to make a row, so held my peace, determined to take part in guard duty until morning."

"An' you're still tryin' to stuff it down our throats that you can talk with your father in Seaview over that lot of truck you've got up at Swallow-Tailed cove?" Ernest cried angrily.

"If you need positive proof, I'll telegraph for him to come here to-morrow, repeating all I have heard you say about sleeping instead of watching, and if he isn't here before sunset the Hampton boat shall be yours. Do you want to try the experiment?"

"I'll never believe you can send words on nothin' but air," Ernest said doggedly.

"Then you shall have all the proof that is needed before to-morrow night, and when my father repeats what you have said about crawling among the bushes near the spring, I reckon you'll believe there is more in wireless telegraphy than you fancied."

"There ain't any need to go so far as that," Sam replied quickly, and by the tone of his voice one could readily understand that he was more than a trifle afraid Paul might be able to do as he announced. "We won't allow that you can send a lot of words on nothin' but air; but it don't stand to reason we want'er take the chances of losin' this job."

"Then do as you have agreed with my father. Strive earnestly to prevent any one from coming ashore here, and I'll hold my tongue. You can't afford to have this business fail, because it means good wages for all your family during many years, and, since you perform no other work than that of watching, it can't be so hard that you'd be willing to prove false to your promises. I'll do my share, and between the three of us, with your father to stand watch during the daytime when we are sleeping, it can't be so very hard."

"We'll watch all right," Ernest said after a brief pause, "an' see to it that no one gets ashore, except it may be John Ed, an' I don't allow we can cut much ice when it comes to buckin' agin him."

"Why not? In what way is he different from any other man?"

"Wa'al, that's a question I can't answer exactly; but he is different, 'cause he contrives to do pretty much as he allows, an' it don't seem as if anybody could get the best of him."

"Of course you can't if you crawl away among the bushes to sleep at the very time when you have every reason to believe he is near at hand," Paul cried earnestly. "I believe he is close by even now, and may be hearing what we say, therefore it stands us in hand to keep our eyes open wide."

"What more can we do than walk back an' forth on the shore?" Ernest asked sulkily, and Paul replied sharply:

"Keep perfectly quiet so that he can't have any idea

as to where you are, and move to and fro so swiftly that he won't get a chance to slip past you."

"But s'pose we come across him? What's to be done then?" Sam asked.

"Didn't your father tell you what to do?"

"He said we was to stop anybody from comin' ashore; but that was before he knew John Ed was goin' to take a hand in the muss."

"Do you fancy he allows that John Ed can do just as he pleases?" Paul asked sternly.

"I don't know what he allows; but it's a fact that the old villain carries his point whenever he tries, an' since you wouldn't give him a tow I reckon he'll try mighty hard," Sam said, still giving evidence of being in the sulks.

"Look here, boys," and Paul did his best to appear friendly despite all the disagreeable things which had been said, "we are bound to keep Bingham at a distance, and I'll do my share to-night. If you are so certain that he can't be held in check, father shall come over to-morrow and bring with him those who are not afraid of the smuggler. Now instead of standing here talking for the benefit, perhaps, of the very man we are on guard against, suppose we separate with the idea that each of us is personally responsible in the matter of his getting ashore. We will work independently of each other, meeting here from time to time, and do our very best until sunrise. Is it a bargain?"

"What'll we do if we come across John Ed on the island?" Sam asked with the air of one who puts a question which cannot well be answered.

"Hold him, and yell for me. I'm not afraid of one man, and if I can't get the best of him single-handed, I'll guarantee that he don't do any harm to the foxes."

The two Downs boys moved away as if agreeing to the proposition made by Paul, and when they were lost to view in the darkness the lad from Seaview said to himself:

"That old smuggler knows full well that the people here are afraid of him, and it is more than likely, in case he really does come, that he'll be bold enough to land at the cove as if believing himself a welcome visitor. Therefore I'll put in the most of my guard duty there, and try to decide what I ought to do in the way of letting father know what I have heard this night."

Then Paul stole softly toward the cove, with sufficient of a mental burden for a grown man of long experience. It was evident to him that the Downs boys could not be depended upon to guard the island as Mr. Simpson believed necessary, and yet at the same time it was a question whether he would be warranted in saying that which would cause his father to make a complete change of plans.

The lad understood full well that if his father was convinced the island boys might neglect to do their full duty, he would not hesitate to replace them with more reliable employees. Thus would be raised up at least three enemies to the silver fox scheme, and such enemies as might be able to work very much harm owing to their knowledge of the island and all its coves and harbors.

"I'll have a talk with Mr. Downs the first thing in the morning," Paul said to himself after studying long and earnestly on the subject as he skirted the shore of the cove, "and if he claims John Ed is such a wonderful man that he can make a landing no matter how many are on the lookout, then I'm warranted in telling father all that has happened this night."

Now it is barely possible that Paul was "more frightened than hurt," as the old adage has it, for when morning came no sign could be seen of the smuggler. At intervals during the night the three lads had met, thus showing that all were at least awake and moving around; but no one had seen or heard anything of a suspicious nature, and Sam said sleepily when Paul announced that there was no good reason why they should not go to breakfast:

"All that talk of yours was wasted, 'cause John Ed didn't come 'round, an' we'd been jest as well off if we'd had a snooze."

"The fact that perhaps no one landed here during the night doesn't prove that there is no need of keeping a strict watch," Paul replied stoutly. "What troubles me most, and I am certain father will look at it in the same light, is that you believe the smuggler can do just as he pleases, therefore there's no use in trying to guard against him——"

Paul was interrupted by the appearance of Mr. Downs, who cried heartily as he came in sight of the boys:

"Wa'al, how about it? Seen or heard anythin'?"

"Not a hooter, an' we've been makin' fools of our-

selves walkin' 'round this bloomin' island all night when we might'er been in bed."

"We 'greed with Mr. Simpson that we'd keep our eyes open from sunset to sunrise, an' seein's we're paid for it, there's nothin' else to be done," the old man replied, and Paul would have been more relieved in mind had he laid greater emphasis on the fact that they also promised to prevent any one from coming ashore.

"I reckon mother much the same as had a fit when she found that you didn't come to get any of the supper she was keepin' hot for yer," the old man continued as he turned to face Paul. "There's no use in your takin' hold so strong at the jump, 'cause it don't stand to reason any body will do harm to the foxes till they've had a chance to breed, when they won't be so terrible wild."

"Father believes we should be on guard every moment, and I've been trying to do what I know he wants done."

"That's all right, sonny; but at the same time he don't allow that you're goin' to kill yourself, 'cause there'll be foxes an' to spare long after you an' me are in our graves. The boys tell me that you got your contraption to workin', an' believe you knew what the folks at Seaview were sayin'."

"I knew what one person was saying," Paul replied without any very great show of spirit. Mr. Downs had shown, as it seemed to him, a willingness to neglect the work such as his sons had displayed, and there was no longer any question in his mind but that duty to

his father demanded that he make all the facts known without delay.

"I'll tell him the substance of what has been said by the old man as well as the boys, and it shall be for him to decide what ought to be done," he said to himself, and for the benefit of Mr. Downs and his sons he added aloud, "I believe it will be better if father comes over to-day to see for himself how the work has been begun, and after breakfast I'll tell him so."

"Then you've really got the idee that there's no trouble 'bout sendin' word to Seaview with that lot of truck up yonder?" and Mr. Downs looked pityingly at him, as the lad fancied.

Paul's heart was heavy with anxiety, and he no longer had the spirit to make reply, save as he said in a low tone:

"That's what I believe, and I shall still have a very good idea that it is a fact, even after you have decided that wireless telegraphy is a delusion and a snare."

CHAPTER V

TELLTALE SIGNS

It was as if Mrs. Downs realized that there was some disturbing element in the household, for she seemingly made every effort to arouse Paul from the thoughtful mood into which he had fallen after having learned that Mr. Downs was no more inclined to carry out all his promises than were the boys.

The good woman reproached the lad in a motherly tone because of having neglected to eat his supper, and cried out against his taking part in the guard duty when he was, as she said, not accustomed to such rough work.

"I have cooked these 'ere flapjacks especially for you, because I'm thinkin' you're sort of a mother's boy, an' need coddlin'," she said, laying her hand tenderly on the lad's shoulder. "Sam an' Ernest haven't had a chance to be finnicky about what they eat, so long's there's enough; but it will be different with you, I reckon. I noticed you didn't take half as much bacon as I'd laid out for you yesterday noon. I tell my menfolks that as long as they eat I ain't worried about 'em; it's when they peck here an' there, same's you're doin', that I scurry 'round to get sulphur an' molasses ready."

Paul tried really hard to convince Mrs. Downs that he was neither ill nor suffering from lack of food, and in this laudable effort he ate at least three more griddle

cakes than he otherwise would have done, hoping thereby to give her convincing proof that he was in no need of anything in the nature of sulphur and molasses.

Strive as he might, however, it was impossible to throw off the forebodings which had come upon him when he learned how little inclined the male members of the Downs family were to live up to both the letter and the spirit of the contract made for the running of Silver Fox Farm.

He had already decided that it was in the highest degree necessary his father should visit Barren island at the earliest possible moment; but Ned had told him the night previous that he would not be at the Seaview station until seven o'clock that morning, and it was only a few minutes past five when he arose from the breakfast table, heedless alike of Mrs. Downs's protests and arguments there was no need for him to "tramp 'round the island" doing guard duty, because it was not likely any one would try to make a landing at that early hour.

As a matter of fact Paul was not intending to act the part of sentinel. He did not believe John Ed Bingham would attempt, after the threats he had made, to visit the island in the daytime, and therefore it was the same as a fact in his mind that there was little necessity for playing the part of lookout until another night had come.

"When are you goin' to make up the sleep you lost last night?" Mrs. Downs asked as he stepped out of the door, and Paul replied carelessly:

"Oh, I can do that almost any time."

"Better go to bed while you're in the mood for it," the good woman insisted. "You'll stand more chance of goin' to sleep if you set about it before gettin' so wide awake."

"I've got to talk with father at seven o'clock, and then if you'll lend me a blanket, I'll lie down in the shanty."

While making this reply he had hurried away from the house in order to put an end to the conversation, and involuntarily he turned his face in the direction of the cove, walking aimlessly on until arriving at the water's edge, when he stood gazing at the Hampton boat, hardly seeing her because his thoughts were so far away.

After a few moments, however, the fact slowly dawned upon him that the power boat was not as he had left it, and once this possibility suggested itself to his mind he became keenly on the alert.

He could see above the rail one corner of the motor covering. It was of heavy vulcanized cloth, made in the form of a box, and enveloped the entire machinery. Looking back upon the events of the previous night, he remembered distinctly not only having put this screen on carefully, but fastening down the corners with loops set into the cloth for that purpose.

"Somebody has been on board of her since I left," he said, speaking aloud as he ran swiftly toward the dory belonging to the Downs boys, which had been hauled up above high water mark.

It was no slight task for him to drag the heavy craft

unaided over the sand; but so great was his excitement, for now all the forebodings of the night before had come upon him with redoubled force, that he finally succeeded, and with feverish haste pulled across the small cove to the Hampton boat.

It was not necessary he should go on board in order to make certain some one had visited her. Not only was the vulcanized cover showing above the rail; but it had been entirely removed from the motor, and two wrenches which he knew beyond question had been stowed in the locker, were lying on the floor as if having lately been used.

In a twinkling he was over the rail, not forgetting, however, to bring the dory's painter with him, and then a cry of dismay burst from his lips.

The sparker of the motor had been removed, and was nowhere to be seen. Two nuts had been taken off, and were missing also. In fact, the motor had been evidently hastily, but certainly, put out of commission, and it must have been done by some person who intended to visit the island with evil intent, in order to prevent pursuit in case of being discovered.

"It's that miserable smuggler!" Paul exclaimed, looking here and there along the shore as if almost expecting to see John Ed Bingham come out from some place of concealment. Then after a brief time of thought he added, "It doesn't seem possible any man would do such a thing simply because I refused to give him a tow, nor is it reasonable to believe he could come at the foxes now while they are so wild; yet who else has done the mischief?"

Then came the knowledge that whoever had disabled the boat must have come into the cove during the night. Hurriedly covering the motor, he rowed quickly to the shore, pulled the dory out of the water as far as possible, threw her anchor on the sand, and ran along the beach looking for some signs of the visitor.

The tide was at its lowest mark, and, therefore, six hours must have elapsed since the beach was covered with water. If any person had landed since eleven o'clock he ought to see some evidence of such fact.

Walking slowly and scrutinizing every foot of the shimmering sands, he continued on along the southerly side of the cove until rounding the point, and then there were before him signs sufficiently plain to tell beyond a peradventure that some man had visited Barren island since midnight.

About half-way between high and low water marks was the imprint of a dory's bow in the sand, with footsteps leading up on shore in a southeasterly direction, and returning at an angle, as if he who made them had come directly from Farmer Downs's house.

As a matter of course there was no real proof that the intruder had held communication with any member of Mr. Downs's family; but it was at least suspicious that these footprints were on a direct course from the farm-house.

"Whoever landed came about three hours ago," Paul said to himself as he stood studying the trails left so boldly on the sand. "The dory's bow must have struck here when the tide was about half ebb, else the

water would have washed the imprint away, and that was at the time I went around the shore of Swallow-Tailed cove, thinking Sam and Ernest, after all that had been said, would keep sharp watch here."

Paul started to follow the line of footprints leading up on to the shore; but, as a matter of course, losing them immediately he was among the loose sand above high water mark, and he was not sufficiently versed in woodcraft to be able to follow them on the grass. Therefore it was that such story as he evolved from these telltale signs must be confined to that narrow space between the limit of the tide at its height, and the imprint of the dory's bow.

Surely Paul Simpson was confronted with a problem which would have perplexed and alarmed a wiser head than his. He believed with good reason that those whom his father depended on to guard the silver foxes were wilfully neglectful of duty despite all the warnings he had given them the night before, and yet what more could he do than already had been done?

Mr. Downs, as well as his sons, had no faith in Paul's ability to send a message across the waters to Seaview, therefore believed that Mr. Simpson could not be warned of the course which they evidently intended to pursue.

"It may be that one or the other of them wrecked the Hampton boat so that I couldn't run over and tell father what I know," he said to himself, and immediately afterward dismissed such a thought from his mind, because it was not reasonable to suppose they would do that which might so readily be brought home

to them, since it must in time either be admitted that some one had visited the island in disregard of Mr. Simpson's commands, or that they themselves had done the mischief.

"There's little sense in my staying here studying over the matter. There's no wind, and the sea is calm; father can come over in the old power boat without danger, and I will tell him all that has happened. It is better to let him know I am really frightened, than keep secret what seems to me such plain evidence of treachery."

The knowledge that it would be possible to shift the responsibility which weighed so heavily upon him, to his father's shoulders, served to cheer the lad somewhat, and turning his back upon the telltale signs, he walked rapidly toward the station, increasing his speed as the idea occurred to him that perhaps some mischief might have been done there during the short time he had been in the farm-house eating breakfast.

Everything at the wireless station was as he had left it, and with a long-drawn sigh of relief he settled back in the rude chair facing the instrument, to wait until it should be time to open communication with Seaview, turning over in his mind again and again all the disquieting events of the past twelve hours.

A few moments before seven o'clock he started the motor, and in the absence of anything else with which to occupy his time, set about sending out the call n-d, and listening now and then for the reply which he did not believe would come immediately.

His surprise was great, therefore, on hearing the

letters p-l when he had switched on the receiving apparatus, and at once Ned began to explain, as if thinking an apology was necessary, why he had come into his station so early.

"After what you told me about that smuggler it was pretty hard work to fall asleep. I was awake before daylight, and have been here half an hour or more calling you."

"And I have been loafing around waiting until seven o'clock," Paul clicked back in reply. "Can you get father right away?"

"He is just coming up the hill."

"Write this down for him: The Downs family did not believe it necessary to keep strict watch. I had sharp words with the boys last night when they insisted there was no need to stand guard. Mr. Downs seems to be of much the same mind. None of them believe I can send a message. Between two and five o'clock some person landed in a dory just south of the cove, and went up the beach as if going to the spring. Coming back the footprints led from the direction of the farm-house. You must come here without delay."

When the last word had been clicked off Paul waited for the reply, feeling that more than half his burden had been swept away now his father knew the exact condition of affairs, and he found time to congratulate himself on the excellence of the work which he and Ned had done, for the two stations were in perfect harmony, consequently there was no difficulty in receiving clearly any signal from Seaview.

Then the warning sound came, and Paul read by the dots and dashes these words:

"Will start for Barren island as soon as I find the man whom I shall hire to assist you. Will be there probably about noon."

"You can't get here too soon," Paul's return message began. "If John Ed Bingham should come into the cove the Downs Family would do nothing to prevent his landing. They are afraid of him."

That his father was trying to cheer him Paul understood when Ned sent with fairly good speed the message:

"There is little danger any mischief will be done during the daytime. Will be with you at noon."

When Paul had read this, Ned added on his own account:

"Your father has hurried away to find Zenas Cushing. He will hire him to stay with you. I shall plug at my books mighty hard in the hope of being with you shortly for a day or two. Will come into the station at twelve-thirty this noon, and again at six to-night. Good-by."

"Talk about wireless telegraphy!" Paul said to himself in a tone of satisfaction and triumph as he shut off the motor and locked up the instruments. "Father's silver fox farming would be the same as at an end within twenty-four hours if Ned and I hadn't spent our time studying the transmission of wave sounds. I reckon Mr. Downs will come to understand that this 'contraption' of mine isn't such a piece of fool business as he and his sons have allowed. Of course John

Ed Bingham won't attempt to come ashore this forenoon, and if he should, wouldn't dare to molest the foxes, therefore I may as well go over to the house for some blankets. Until things get into better shape I intend to sleep here, where I can get at the instrument at any moment it may be necessary."

Paul was locking the door of the shanty when Mr. Downs himself came up from the shore directly opposite the station, and cried as soon as he was within hailing distance:

"Been tunin' your fiddle agin this mornin'?"

"I did that last night," Paul made reply cheerily, for his heart was very light now he knew that his father would speedily be with him. "It's working like a charm."

"Been talkin' with your father, eh?"

"Yes. He's coming over. Will be here about noon."

"Sho! Now, boy! You don't mean to tell me that you know he's comin'—that you found it out with that 'ere contraption?"

"That's what I did, and when he gets here you'll be forced to admit that there's something in wireless telegraphy after all, won't you?"

"Yes, when he gets here," Mr. Downs replied with a drawl. "But the proof of the puddin' is in the eatin', and I shall have to wait till he flashes up before agreein' that you have talked with him this mornin'."

"It won't be long that you'll have to wait for the proof of the pudding, Mr. Downs, so there's no reason

why we should argue the matter. Did you know that some one came ashore here last night about two o'clock?"

"Sho, now! What put that idee into your head, lad? There couldn't any one have landed here with all three of you boys on watch, unless we'd knowed about it. How did you get sich a wrinkle?"

"Well, in the first place the motor on the Hampton boat has been disabled—the sparker and two nuts carried away; and that reminds me, I should have told father to bring me over some extra fittings."

Turning suddenly, Paul unlocked the door of the shanty, hurriedly set the motor in motion, and began calling n-d with furious energy.

Again and again he listened for a reply, Mr. Downs standing by with an expression of incredulity and curiosity written on his face, in much the same attitude as Sam assumed the night before.

"It's no use," Paul said mournfully as he shut off the motor and locked up the instruments again. "Ned gave me fair warning that he was going, and when he comes back at half-past twelve it will be too late for father to bring the things over with him."

"She don't work, eh?" and Mr. Downs appeared particularly well pleased. "Ain't movin' like a charm now, eh?"

"The instruments are all right; but Ned isn't there to receive the message. He'll be at his station at twelve-thirty this noon, and I can get him then."

"Yes, I reckon you can," and both the tone and the smile on the old man's face were well calculated to

anger a lad of Paul's excitable disposition, for it was much the same as if he had been accused of telling a falsehood. "Wa'al, so long's she ain't workin', let's get down to this 'ere tale 'bout some one's comin' ashore last night. It seems to me, lad, your head is goin' wrong. You've been thinkin' so much about these 'ere silver foxes that you can't get 'em out of your mind, even after they're safe an' snug among the bushes."

"I intend they shall stay there safe and snug," Paul replied firmly, "if we can prevent such people as John Ed Bingham from landing here."

"Sho now, boy! Don't you trouble your head 'bout John Ed. He's got other fish to fry 'stead of scurryin' 'round this 'ere island for foxes what are wilder'n hawks. Bless your heart, he couldn't trouble 'em if he wanted to; an' besides, John Ed don't get far out of his way without there's a dollar in it."

"There would be a good many dollars in it if he could get one of those fox pelts."

"Well, there, perhaps you're right. I ain't a-sayin' but that they're worth a heap of money, though I can't bring myself to believe anybody would be fool enough to pay sich a price as your father did. He can afford to go into these 'ere schemes, an' seein's he's bent on 'em, people as have got foxes to sell are goin' to put the price on mighty thick."

"What the foxes are worth has nothing to do with the matter, Mr. Downs," Paul said hotly. "If you have any doubts as to whether some person came on this island after the last high tide, suppose you walk down

to the cove with me, for there can be found evidence enough to convince even you."

"I don't know as there's any reason why I shouldn't, lad, seein's all we've got to do is to catch a few pollock or cunners to leave up by the spring 'cordin' to orders; but it seems to me it would be a good deal wiser for you to try an' get some sleep, same's Sam and Ernest are doin'."

"I'll attend to that part of it after father comes. I want you to see that despite the watch which was kept last night, some one came ashore, and unless we go before the tide gets up the evidences of the visit will be washed away."

"I'll do anythin' on airth to please you, lad, only I'm beggin' of you not to take this 'ere business so much to heart. I know how kind of excitable an' flirty boys are, an' allers feel like advisin' 'em to keep cool. Things will go on jest as well if you don't fret, as if you wore your heart out."

"We'll go an' look at the signs," Paul said, not minded to continue such a profitless conversation, and leading the way at a pace which speedily caused Mr. Downs to call for a halt, as he said:

"Old bodies don't move as spry as young ones, an' what with the rheumatiz in my knee, an' a crick in my back, I ain't in shape to go at any ten-knot gait."

Despite his infirmities, however, Mr. Downs did succeed in gaining the shore of the island just beyond the southerly point of the cove, and Paul pointed out to him the depression caused by the dory's bow, as well

as the footprints in the sand, asking sharply meanwhile:

"What do you think of that? Isn't it evidence that some one came ashore here when the tide was about half ebb? That they went off in the direction of the spring, and returned as if coming directly from your house?"

"Well, now, lad, it does look amazin'ly like that, an' yet I'm bound to say agin that it can't be, 'cause there was you, an' Sam, and Ernest all on watch."

"I was near Swallow-Tailed cove at two o'clock last night, which must have been about the time when the boat came ashore. Ernest and Sam were somewhere around here. We had had hard words; they insisted that it would be as well to go up into the bushes near the spring and sleep, regardless of the fact that we have orders not to go there, and again that father expects they will remain on duty during the hours of darkness."

"Now see here, sonny, let me try to persuade you not to take this thing so hard. Your father he says to me, says he, 'Daniel, can I trust you an' your boys to take care of Barren island so's nobody can come ashore except them as I send?' An' I says to him, says I, 'Mr. Simpson, seein's how I've allers lived on Barren island, an' seein's how you've the same as bought it under my feet, why I can be depended on to do jest whatever you want.' An' that's a fact, lad. Now when you go to fussin' an' snoopin' 'round, seein' signs in the sand here, an' gettin' fool notions in your head that Sam an' Ernest reckoned on sleepin' when

they ought'er be awake, why you're only muddlin' things. We want to get on peaceable-like, an' do this job as easy as it can be done, not strainin' ourselves. The foxes will live jest as long if we take a little bit of comfort now an' then, as if we was cahootin' 'em up an' down this island with their tails tied together."

"To go back to what you can see here in the sand, Mr. Downs," Paul interrupted. "Isn't it clear to you that some one came ashore since high tide?"

"Wa'al," the old man said as he rubbed his chin vigorously, "it does have a look that way, an' yet at the same time I ain't quite prepared to admit it, seein's how you three boys were on watch. Now I'll tell you what we'd best do. I'll kinder look inter this thing, takin' plenty of time to consider all the whys and wherefores, while you go to the house an' get some sleep. Better bottle up what you can 'twixt now an' when your father comes, if so be he is comin'."

Paul could understand very readily that Mr. Downs was not disposed to discuss the real question at issue, and, in fact, it gave the lad but little concern, since he believed his father would soon be on the island to take charge.

Therefore it was that he seemingly acted upon the farmer's suggestion, by going to the house and asking Mrs. Downs for a couple of blankets to be carried to the shanty, adding in explanation:

"I shall be obliged to spend a good deal of my time there, and count on putting up a bunk in order to be comfortable. Two blankets will be enough for me this warm weather."

The good woman was loud in her protestations against his proposition, insisting that her beds were "good an' sweet," and it would be better for him to use them than run the risk of getting cold by sleeping in such a place.

The lad persisted, however, and finally she brought to him not only blankets, but a small straw mattress, evidently of home manufacture.

"If *you're* bound to be foolish, my son, *I'm* bound you shall be comfortable, so far as it's in my power to make you. I know what it is to be a mother, an' won't see another woman's son sleepin' cold or goin' hungry if I can help myself."

If Paul had attempted to combat all her arguments, or answer all the questions she asked regarding this idea of sleeping in the shanty, the day might have been spent before any definite conclusion was arrived at; but instead of wasting his breath he gathered up the blankets and the bed, hurrying off in the direction of Swallow-Tailed cove while Mrs. Downs stood in the doorway loudly expressing her views of "boys who would be so pig-headed."

Paul might have put up the bunk at once but for the fact that he was weary of body and his eyes heavy with slumber, therefore on arriving at the shanty he threw the bed upon the flooring of boards, covered it with blankets, and laid down to dreamless sleep.

He was awakened by the opening of the door, and starting up suddenly saw Sam holding in his hands a tray on which were several dishes covered with a snowy white towel, the visitor saying as he laid his

burden on the trunk containing the telegraph instruments:

"Ma'm got tired of waitin'. She's kept this stuff in the oven nigh to two hours, thinkin' you'd come, an' when I turned out she allowed I'd got to bring it up here, though it does seem as if you might set down to the table with us like Christian folks."

"Have you had dinner?" Paul exclaimed, starting to his feet hurriedly and gazing out of the door. "What time is it?"

"Nigh to three o'clock."

"Three o'clock! and Ned was in his station at twelve-thirty! Why I've slept more than six hours."

"I reckon that's what you have done," Sam replied with a grin. "You was reelin' it off mighty loud when I opened the door."

"Has father come yet?"

"Haven't seen anythin' of him. Didn't you allow that 'ere wireless tangle of yours said he was comin' at noon?"

"That's what he promised," Paul said curtly as he stepped out of the shanty to where he could have a view of the cove, much as if believing his father must be in sight.

"Did he promise it, or was it somethin' you dreamed?" and Sam's tone was exceedingly aggravating. "You've got a good many queer notions about what this 'ere wireless thing of yours, as you call it, can do, an', as father says, it ain't any ways certain but that you are gettin' mixed a good deal in your reckonin'. I ain't claimin' but you *believe* you've

talked with the folks over to Seaview," he added as Paul turned upon him angrily. "Father says most likely you are honest enough in it; but things ain't quite what you're allowin' they are."

Paul made no reply, save to say as he laid hold of the shanty door:

"If you will go out I'll lock the door. Father must come soon, and I'll be at the cove to meet him."

"But what about your dinner?" and Sam made no attempt to do as he was bidden.

"That can wait. Go out so that I may lock the door."

"An' hold my hand on my head till your father gets here, you mean, eh?" the island boy said as he slowly obeyed the command. "Wa'al now see here, Paul, I'm allowin' it will be a mighty long while 'tween meals if you don't eat before he comes. Anyhow, it's none of my business if you want to starve yourself."

Paul had locked the door and was walking rapidly toward the cove before Sam ceased speaking. He was reproaching himself with having slept when he should have been on duty. It seemed to him certain that Ned was in the Seaview Station exactly at the hour appointed, and that he must have called and called without receiving any reply. Perhaps his father had tried to send him a message, telling why he could not come as agreed upon, of which he must remain in ignorance because of having neglected his duty, and for the time being it seemed to him that he was as culpable in this respect as Sam and Ernest had been the night previous.

The farmer was at the head of the cove when Paul

came down looking woefully disappointed, and he said with an expression which was equally as irritating as Sam's grin:

"I allow that 'ere contraption of yours didn't tell the truth when it said your father would be here at noon, eh?"

"He will come before night," Paul replied sharply.

"Did you get the message on air, same's the other?"

"I got it directly from my father, and if I hadn't allowed myself to sleep when I should have been on duty, we would know by this time why he isn't here."

"Wa'al, I'm glad you've got such comfortin' thoughts, lad," Mr. Downs replied with a drawl. "Some folks would have turned square about an' agreed that there wasn't anythin' in this air business, while then agin, some others would keep on allowin' it was all right, same's you're doin', so as I said before, I'm glad you've got so much to comfort you."

"Father will be here before sunset," Paul repeated as he turned sharply around, intent only on going where it would not be possible to hear or see either Mr. Downs or his sons, and the farmer called after him:

"If you haven't got it any straighter now than you had this mornin', why we won't stay out of bed watchin' for him."

CHAPTER VI

A WELCOME ARRIVAL

THE only question in Paul's mind, aside from that as to why his father's arrival had been delayed, was how he might occupy his time until six o'clock, when Ned was to be at the Seaview station, without coming in contact with the Downs family.

It was only natural he should go directly to the shanty after his rather disagreeable interview with the farmer, and immediately after arriving there he hit upon a plan for causing the time to seem to pass more rapidly than if he remained idly on the watch for his father's coming.

"I'll build that bunk now, and fix up the shanty so there won't be any need of going to the farm-house except when I'm hungry," he said as he entered the small apartment, and then, his glance falling upon the food which Sam had brought some time previous, he decided to begin operations by eating the long-delayed dinner.

Mrs. Downs had sent him sufficient food to provide a hearty meal for at least three hungry boys, and therefore, when he had hurriedly satisfied his hunger, there remained in the way of provisions enough for supper and breakfast.

"I'll have to make a cupboard to keep the surplus food in," he said, speaking aloud as if in the sound of his own voice he found a certain sense of companion-

ship, "for there is no knowing how many times I may find it desirable to skip a meal at the farm-house. Of course I shan't want to do so to-night, because father must be here before supper-time; but it's a good idea to be prepared for almost anything on Barren island, as I have already found out."

There was sufficient lumber near at hand for his limited wants, and before the time set for Ned's visit to the Seaview station, not only the bunk, but a rude cupboard, had been built against the side of the shanty.

He did not neglect to keep a sharp lookout over the water in the direction of Seaview while he labored, and his disappointment and perplexity increased each moment, for, as far as his vision extended, there was no craft, however small, to be seen.

As on the previous night, he succeeded in working himself into a most uncomfortable frame of mind through imagining all sorts of disagreeable things which might have happened to his father, and by speculating unwisely upon the possible course which Mr. Downs and his sons would pursue after having proven, as they believed, that the wireless telegraph was a delusion if not a snare.

The only pleasing thing about this working, waiting and watching was that neither of the Downs family came near him, and perhaps it was fortunate they remained absent, for he was in such a nervous, excited frame of mind that had Sam stood before him with that exasperating grin upon his face, the chances are there would have been a wordy quarrel between the two, if nothing more.

Fifteen minutes before six Paul had his instruments in working order, and began calling n-d with a view of having something with which to occupy his mind and his fingers.

Promptly at the time set Ned answered the call, and feverishly Paul sent out wave sounds which read, as his friend received them:

"Has father left Seaview yet?"

"I tried to tell you about it this noon. Where were you? Wasn't the station working?" came back the reply, and Paul almost winced as he wired back:

"I was chasing around the island all last night, and when I fell asleep this morning, did not awaken till three o'clock. Where is father?"

"He couldn't find Zenas Cushing as early as he expected, and decided to wait until this evening in order to learn for himself if you were right in believing that the Downs boys did not keep sharp watch. His orders are for you to stay in the station, giving no heed to anything outside. If he can land without their knowing it, he will join you at the shanty."

"Is he coming in my old boat?" Paul asked, and the reply was received:

"Yes."

"He will have to lengthen the muffler, or they will hear him before he gets within two miles."

"Don't worry about that. He has got a better scheme than fooling with the muffler. I am in a hurry. Have you anything more to say?"

"Sure father is coming?"

"Certain; but don't tell the Downses."

"O. K. Good-by."

Ned delayed long enough to wire back his good-by, and communication between Barren island and Seaview was shut off; but during the brief exchange of words it was as if a new boy had taken Paul's place—one who was free from care, and anticipated no little pleasure, as might have been told from the expression on his face.

"Now Sam Downs can jolly me all he pleases," Paul said to himself with a chuckle of satisfaction as he closed the lid of the heavy trunk and locked it, after having switched off the motor. "The father as well as the sons have come to believe by this time that there is nothing in this wireless business, and between now and midnight, unless I am greatly mistaken, a dozen people might land here secretly."

At this moment the horn could be heard sounding a prolonged and peremptory summons to supper, and the lad from Seaview decided that he would join the family, although so far as concerned his appetite there was no good reason for so doing.

As Paul had expected, Mr. Downs and his sons had very much to say concerning the possibility of sending messages on air, and asked many questions as to why he had imagined his father would come across to the island that day.

An hour previous such a fire of raillery and incredulity would have provoked him to anger; but now he enjoyed their wilfully disagreeable remarks, because of knowing that before morning the tables would be turned.

"No, I am not ready to say that the wireless telegraph doesn't work exactly as it should; but father failed to come when I believed he would," Paul said in reply to a bantering question from Mr. Downs. "Within the next twenty-four hours, however, you are going to be willing to admit that all I have said is true."

"That is right, lad. Keep puttin' it off. Last night we was goin' to know before mornin'; this mornin' we would know before night, an' now we'll know before to-morrow. I'm allowin ' the summer will be passed with you still settin' the day ahead."

Because Paul made no reply Mrs. Downs found, for the first time, an opportunity to ask him his reasons for not coming to dinner, and why he failed to bring back with him the dishes on which she had sent the food.

Sam undertook to answer the question by explaining, in what he thought a highly humorous manner, the condition in which he had found the operator when he entered the building, and Paul added to the fund of information by saying there was so much food remaining that he had kept it in the shanty in order to have a lunch during the night, in the event of his remaining there.

"Mercy on us! Are you countin' on stayin' out of your bed agin?" Mrs. Downs exclaimed in dismay. "There's no sense in a boy like you workin' himself up over such a whifflin' creeter as a fox. Father tells me you've got an idee Sam an' Ernest ain't doin' what they ought'er. Why bless your heart, Paul, they was

born an' bred on this 'ere island, so it stands to reason both of 'em know every inch of it, an' it would be a pretty smart kind of a man who could get past 'em without bein' seen or heard."

"I'm goin' to take your word for it to-night, at least, Mrs. Downs," Paul said with a serious air. "I do not intend to stand guard while they are on duty; but I must stay in the shanty in case any one at Seaview calls me."

"Wa'al, that won't be so bad seein's how you've got a bed an' blankets," the good woman replied reflectively; "but it does seem as if you ought'er come inter the house like a decent boy."

"He'll be as well off there as here, mother," Mr. Downs said decidedly, and Paul fancied he could detect an expression of relief on the faces of Sam and Ernest when he had said it was not his intention to stand watch during the night.

"That 'ere shanty is water-tight, if two thickness of boards can make it so, an' after he has put up a bunk matters will be right snug."

"I have only built a framework for the mattress; but I've made a closet to keep my food in, and if there was any need for it I might remain there two or three days and not suffer discomfort or inconvenience," Paul said cheerily, rising from the table after having gone through the form of eating supper without consuming any great amount of food.

"But surely, child, you're not going back there so soon!" Mrs. Downs cried in a motherly tone. "Stay here an' visit with us a while. It don't really seem as

if I had seen you, 'cause you've been out of doors so much since your friend went back. Now he was a real likable boy; didn't bother his head any too much 'bout what was bein' done; took things as they come, an' was lively 'round the house."

"Perhaps you might say the same of me if I hadn't been feeling so anxious about the foxes," Paul replied with a laugh, "but most likely that will wear off after a while."

"It sure will, " Mr. Downs said in a tone of conviction, while Sam and Ernest grinned exasperatingly. "You've kind of got the idee in your head that this island an' everything on it would go to everlastin' smash if you didn't keep an eye out, an' when you find that things will run 'bout the same whether you're on deck or not, why it won't come so hard on you. Be you really goin' now, instead of stoppin' a spell with mother an' me?"

"I want to make ready for the night, and shall feel easier in mind if I'm there," Paul replied, and Sam added with a grin:

"He wants to get that contraption of his workin' 'twixt now an' mornin', so's he can prove that it's what he claims for it."

"It'll be a long while 'twixt now an' another day if the sun don't shine till he prove that messages may be sent on air," Ernest added, and his father joined him in a noisy laugh of derision, during which Paul left the house.

Once again at the shanty he set his instrument and the motor ready to be connected at an instant's notice,

and lighted the lantern, hanging it where the rays might be seen through the small window as a guide for his father's steps.

Then he threw himself upon the bed, thinking how snug and comfortable everything was, when he could thus shut himself in from those whom he had begun to dislike because of not being able to trust them, and again reproaching himself because he had not taken advantage of the second opportunity which presented itself, to inform his father of the fittings that would be needed in order to put the disabled boat into commission.

"I shall have to make a memorandum of such things as ought to be done, and pin it up on the wall so that when I am in communication with Ned the writing can be seen," he thought, and would have carried the idea into execution then and there but that he was resting so comfortably and securely both in body and mind. "Of course I shan't go to sleep after having had so much of it to-day, and I'll be able to hear father when he comes. How surprised the Downs family will be!"

Then it was that he seemingly slipped away from his surroundings; ceased to think of anything unpleasant, and his slow, regular breathing told that he had gone over into the land of Nod even while deciding that he would not do so.

It seemed to him as if he had but just lost himself in the unconsciousness of slumber when the sudden opening of the door admitted a gust of cold wind, and in a twinkling he was on his feet facing Sam, who

wore, as usual, that grin which, as Paul afterward said, "got on his nerves terribly."

"Snoozin', eh?" the lad asked, looking around curiously as if expecting to see something unusual.

"Why shouldn't I sleep while you and Ernest are on watch?" Paul replied, although at the same time he felt a certain sense of shame because he had allowed himself to yield so readily to slumber.

"Wa'al, I can't say as there's any reason why you shouldn't; but I'd be willin' to change places with you this very minute, for it's a nasty kind of a night with the wind off here to the nor'east, an' that's a fact. We don't often get nor'east gales in the summer; but when they do come a fellow feels 'em. Had four last season, an' there was a full week when we couldn't launch a boat. Say, what's the sense in standin' watch tonight? Listen to the breakers off Swallow-Tailed cove! I tell you the surf is reg'larly roarin', an' who'd think of landin'."

"It seems to me this would be the very night when you might expect your friend, John Ed Bingham."

"Haven't got him out of your mind yet, eh?" Sam asked, his grin broadening until Paul was quite confident that he should lose his temper if he gazed at the lad any longer.

"No, and I shan't be likely to forget him until it's known who landed here last night, disabled the Hampton boat, an' came up on the shore."

"Wa'al, now do you know, Paul, I'm kinder thinkin' you dreamed that, same's you did about gettin' a message from your father."

"Take a look at the boat, and say whether you call that a dream or not."

"Ernest an' I went aboard of her this afternoon, an' we've kinder come to the belief you left things that way. I remember how mixed up you was about the foxes, an' as likely as not you did it unbeknownst to yourself."

"A fellow who owns a boat like mine is very likely to disable her without knowing it," Paul said scornfully, and Sam was satisfied to let the conversation drop there, since he had turned it from the question as to whether John Ed Bingham had visited Barren island or not.

"Wa'al, what do you say 'bout knockin' off, seein's how a storm is brewin'?"

"It isn't for me to decide," Paul said sharply. "Your orders were to keep strict watch, and certain it is that any one who came here in a boat now could beach her in the cove without danger."

"But who's comin'?"

"That's a question which can't be answered, as a matter of course. Your agreement was to keep watch every night, and nothing was said about turning in when the weather was dirty."

"Why is it you ain't snoopin' 'round the same as before?"

"Because your mother insisted that you and Ernest would do the work."

"We'll see to it that nobody comes ashore, an' that's our end of the bargain," Sam replied sulkily. "But it seems kinder tough to peg away from now till

mornin', while you are boxed in here so snug an' comfortable."

"I haven't been hired, or ordered, to stand watch."

"Oh, you haven't? It seems to me you're singin' a different tune from what you did last night?"

"All I sung then was that it was my duty to see that you did your work faithfully."

"An' you're kind'er shirkin' it now 'cause the weather ain't fine?"

"I'm obeyin' orders," Paul said sharply, "and you are to do the same."

Sam looked much as if about to make some angry reply; then, evidently thinking better of it, turned on his heel and went out, slamming the door behind him with a force which shook every timber in the frail structure.

Although he had not so intended, Master Downs had done a good turn for Paul by awakening him, because the lad would have been covered with shame and confusion had his father found him asleep, even though his orders were only to remain snug inside the shanty without taking part in guard duty.

"They don't intend to stand watch after dark, and if father shouldn't come as he has agreed, I'm certain both those boys will go quietly to bed to-morrow night whatever the weather may be," Paul said to himself as he paced to and fro the shanty floor to drive the heaviness of slumber from his eyelids.

Twice during the next hour the lad went out of doors and walked around the station to insure wakefulness, after which he became seriously alarmed con-

cerning his father, for the wind was increasing in force, and to his inexperienced eyes it seemed certain a storm would break before midnight.

"The old dory could hold her own in a gale like this," he said half to himself; "but I should want to bring her up into the wind, without making any attempt to gain the island, if I was on board. Besides, it is doubtful if father knows the course well enough to pick out the entrance to the cove while it is so dark."

It was not a difficult matter for Paul to work himself, by aid of his imagination, into a very unenviable frame of mind, and he was nervously pacing the floor when the door opened softly, causing an exclamation of joy and relief to burst from his lips, for as the visitor stepped within the feeble rays of light cast by the lantern, he saw his father.

"If you could only know how glad I am that you have come!" he cried passionately, and Mr. Simpson, putting his arm around the lad's neck affectionately, said with a laugh:

"I cannot believe that your joy is much greater than mine, for Zenas and I had a rough time of it when we shut off the motor and took to the oars."

As he spoke Mr. Simpson half turned, and Paul saw a young fellow nineteen or twenty years of age, heavily built, with an honest, friendly looking face, who had closed the door behind him and was standing with his back against it until the father and son should have exchanged greetings.

"Why did you shut off the motor?" Paul asked in surprise.

"Because your muffler doesn't muffle, and we knew that our watchmen here on the island might hear us a long distance away."

"Did you land without seeing them, sir?"

"Ay, that we did, and what's more, circled around the farm-house without taking especial heed as to whether we made any noise or not, and then came across here. You were right in insisting that I should see for myself, Paul, how the work is being done. To my mind it is of the greatest importance that we prevent any one from coming ashore until the foxes are domesticated; and whether that be true or not, I am paying for such work, and intend it shall be done even if we are obliged to send away the Downs family, root and branch."

"Then you two have been rowing in this heavy sea?" Paul said solicitously, and Zenas Cushing replied with a laugh which was much like the purring of a cat:

"It seems as if we'd been at the oars full half the night. That 'ere screw dragged water terrible, an' it was like pullin' a mud scow to work the dory ahead."

"I was afraid you wouldn't find the entrance to the cove."

"No fear of that," Mr. Simpson replied. "Zenas knows this island almost as well as do the Downs family, and put us in here at the first attempt. Where are the watchers?"

"Somewhere asleep, I fancy," Paul said cheerily, feeling now that all his responsibility was at an end,

and he told of Sam's visit earlier in the night, repeating the conversation.

"Matters will go on different from this out," Mr. Simpson added confidently. "I can depend on Zenas, and between the two of you it should be possible to keep the Downs boys at their work. The question now is as to whether we will arouse the family? I was forced to come away without any supper, and am needing something in the way of food."

Now it was that Paul rejoiced because he had not been sufficiently hungry to eat all that had been sent to him, and he threw open the rude closet with an air of triumph.

In a twinkling the tired men were eating heartily, and while they were thus engaged Paul repeated the substance of all that had been said or done since the foxes were set free.

"Yes, I know John Ed Bingham too well, perhaps," Mr. Simpson said in reply to the question of his son's. "Some years ago I got out a warrant for his arrest on the charge of stealing canvas and spare rigging. It was never served owing to the fact that the old smuggler took good care to give Seaview a wide berth. Since you telegraphed yesterday I have learned from good authority that he knows of the silver fox scheme, and has made boasts that he will be the first to market a pelt. If Bingham was the only man along the coast whom we had reason to fear might do us a mischief, I should believe it possible to guard our stock; but unfortunately there are others almost as disreputable. If Mr. Downs and his sons do not act in

strict accordance with their agreement, there is a fair chance I shall lose the money invested in what very many people believe to be the wildest, most ridiculous proposition ever made."

"Meaning that it would not be possible to raise young ones from the foxes you brought, sir?" Paul asked.

"Yes, that is the idea. It makes little difference whether any one agrees with me or not; but it does seem strange that people can be so pig-headed as to claim that we cannot domesticate a silver fox as well as we can any other animal. To say that they won't breed here on Barren island as well as in their native haunts, seems to me foolish. The only difficulty is to accustom them to the place, and then the greater portion of the work is done. If, however, they are harried and chased before having recovered from their long imprisonment, the chances are against us. And because of such fact, I insist that no one shall come ashore here without my permission."

"But can you prevent people from landing?" Paul asked anxiously. "Suppose a vessel should come in here to-night for harbor, have you the power to order her away."

"No, not if she makes port to ride out a storm. But I surely have the right to prevent her crew from coming ashore. This island has been leased by me, with the privilege of purchasing it at any time within three years, therefore it is the same as my property. With the majority of those who come from motives of curiosity, we shall have no trouble. It is those who are

willing to commit a crime for the sake of making a few dollars whom we must guard against."

"And how long are you going to keep people on guard here?"

"I hope that by the end of a year, if my instructions are carried out to the letter, those who would kill the animals in order to carry away the pelts will have become discouraged. The curious ones will soon learn that it is no use to make the voyage out here if they are not permitted to land."

Then Mr. Simpson went into a long discussion of rare foxes, such as the silver, the blue, and the black, whose pelts are of great value; but there is no reason why his words should be set down here, because we can read at greater length of such animals in any standard work on zoology.

The night was nearly spent before Mr. Simpson, so interested was he in the subject, had concluded his remarks upon foxes in general and silver foxes in particular. Zenas Cushing, who was not particularly interested in zoology, owing to his inability to understand all the terms used, had long since betaken himself to Paul's bed, and was sleeping so noisily one could almost fancy the shanty trembled under the vibrations. The wind had been increasing in violence until now, at an hour before break of day, it was blowing what seamen would call "half a gale," and driving before it the first tokens of a downpour of rain.

"If the three of us can find room on that bed of yours, I think we had better try to get some sleep, my son, and at the same time such close companionship

may serve to keep us warm, for I must confess that as a protection against the northeast wind your shanty is only a partial success."

The lad was quite willing to act upon this suggestion, for now that his father was here, and he knew there was no longer any necessity for him to personally hold the Downs family strictly to their bargain, he was more than ready to atone for the lack of sleep.

Five minutes later, lying under the blankets as snugly as sardines are packed in a box, Mr. Simpson, his son, and Zenas slept the sleep of wearied mortals.

Two hours later the horn was sounded again and again from the farm-house without being heard by the lad it was intended to summon, and shortly after Mr. Downs, whether from motives of hospitality or curiosity one could not say, came into the shanty without ceremony, bringing with him a gust of wind and a shower of rain which aroused the sleepers on the instant.

A most comical picture it would be, if one could depict in words the varying expressions on the farmer's face when he saw his employer rising from the rude bed, and standing before him.

He gazed first at Mr. Simpson and then at the telegraph instruments, as if asking if it was really possible that the "contraption" had summoned the owner of Silver Fox Farm. Ever and again he glanced at Paul, and the lad fancied he could see in Mr. Downs's eyes the question as to whether all that had been said to the boy by the dwellers on the island was known to this unexpected visitor. There were surprise, apprehension,

doubt, and disagreeable anticipation, all and at the same time written upon the weather-beaten face, and it seemed impossible for the old man to give utterance to a single word.

"Well, Mr. Downs, weren't you expecting to see me?" Mr. Simpson asked in a friendly tone. "Didn't Paul tell you I was coming?"

"Wa'al now, neighbor, he's been singin' that song ever since yesterday, an' you hadn't come up to last night. Is it true you sent word to him on the air that you'd be here?"

"I sent him a message over the wireless to that effect."

"Sho, now! You don't really mean to tell me that he an' that boy what helped him build this shanty, can talk to each other while one is at Seaview and the other here, do you?"

"Why, certainly. I should have supposed Paul would have explained everything to you long before this."

"Wa'al, he did make a good deal of talk, but bless your soul, who could put any credit in it when they knew there wasn't nothin' 'twixt and between the two places but air. What's brought you over here so sudden like?"

"Paul told me that night before last some person landed here in a boat, despite the fact that you and your sons were supposed to be on watch. I have too much money at stake to warrant my neglecting such information as that, therefore came over to learn more regarding the matter."

"Wa'al now, neighbor, I reckon you've wasted your time an' your labor," Mr. Downs began hesitatingly. "To tell the truth, he did see what he allowed was the mark of a dory on the sand, an' there were some footprints; but bless your soul how could you, or he, or any of us tell whether they were made then, or four an' twenty hours before?"

"If they were plainly visible half-way between high and low water mark, and the tide had ebbed, it is certainly sufficient proof that they were made within three hours of the time he found them," Mr. Simpson said sternly, and Farmer Downs replied with some hesitation:

"Wa'al, wa'al, perhaps that might be, neighbor; but at the same time I ain't allowin' as there has been any harm done. My boys, as Paul can tell you, were up an' 'round all night."

"It matters little how much they were up, if it was impossible for them to stop any person from coming ashore, and I intend to take such measures as will prevent anything of the kind from occurring again."

"Do you mean to say that we ain't workin' to satisfy you, neighbor?"

"You certainly are not, if people can land here without your knowledge, and the proof this last may be possible, is that Zenas Cushing and I came ashore before midnight, walked entirely around your house, and over here, without seeing any member of your family."

Mr. Downs's eyes dropped as he tried in vain to assume an expression of astonishment, and he was apparently unable to utter a word.

CHAPTER VII

QUESTIONABLE VISITORS

Mr. Simpson waited in vain while one might have counted twenty for the farmer to make some reply, and then, as if dismissing the matter from his mind, he said in a friendly tone:

"I fancy the coming of Zenas and myself won't incommode your wife, so far as breakfast is concerned?"

"Not a bit of it; not a bit of it, sir," and Mr. Downs seemed to have recovered his composure in a certain degree. "Breakfast is ready, an' all that's needed is for you to come down to the house an' get it. I allow there's enough to eat, no matter how many may come."

Mr. Simpson led the way out into the storm, motioning for Paul and Zenas to follow him, and the surprise of the Downs boys, when the newcomers entered the farm-house, was in the highest degree comical.

"Here's Mr. Simpson come over last night to make us a call, mother, an' I declare I can't understand how he landed without you boys seein' him," the farmer began in what he intended should be a jovial tone. "I'm allowin' you kept watch same as I cautioned you to do, from sunset to sunrise, eh?"

"That's what we did," Ernest replied stoutly, "an' never went under cover till it began to rain. Where did you come ashore, sir?" he asked, assuming an expression of innocent surprise.

"In the cove. You can see where we've hauled our boat out," Mr. Simpson replied quietly, as if it was a matter of but little concern to him.

"Well, I declare!" Sam exclaimed. "An' you come here in the dark? Seems as though you must have a pretty good idee of Barren island to run in without strikin' either point of the cove?"

"Yes," was the gentleman's quiet reply, "it is almost as much of a mystery as why you failed to see us when we came up here to the house;" and then, without waiting for an invitation, he seated himself at the table.

Mrs. Downs had not spoken when the newcomers entered the house; but she gazed in what to Paul seemed very much like fear, first at her husband and sons, and then at Mr. Simpson and Zenas, seeming to be in a daze of bewilderment until the guests were seated. Then she bustled around in a most lively fashion to prepare more food, and the farmer, taking his accustomed seat, indulged in a long blessing on the food, which included a prayer for the safety of those who had so unexpectedly come among them. Mr. Downs exerted himself to talk on this subject or that, choosing anything rather than Silver Fox Farm, or the duties of himself and his sons.

"I don't allow you calkerlated to make any very great visit?" the farmer said when Mr. Simpson rose from the table, Zenas and Paul following his example; "but it looks as if you was here for quite a spell now that the storm has set in. What can the boys or me do for you this mornin'?"

"Nothing, thank you," was the almost curt reply. "I'll have a look around the island, and after that has been done it may be possible I shall decide to change my plans somewhat."

"Surely you'll not go out in the storm?" Mrs. Downs cried solicitously, and Paul's father laughed as he replied:

"A little rain won't do any very great harm, and perhaps this weather is best suited to my purpose, though I'm free to confess I shouldn't have chosen a northeast gale as the time for my visit."

Then he, followed by Zenas and Paul, went out of the house, leaving Mr. Downs and his two boys still at the table looking decidedly uncomfortable in mind.

"We brought over a stove for your shanty, Paul," Mr. Simpson said when they were outside facing the furious gale. "Unless you're afraid of getting wet it may be as well for Zenas and you to set it up. We shall make our headquarters at the station, rather than the farm-house, and a little heat there won't go amiss."

"Where are you going, sir?"

"For a cruise around the shore. This is a good time to ascertain at what point any one can land during a heavy sea. I'll join you at the shanty by the time you have got the stove in running order."

"I wonder how it happened that father thought of bringing the stove?" Paul asked curiously as he and Zenas went toward the direction of the cove, while Mr. Simpson followed the line of coast southward.

"I reckon after you'd got through telegraphin' how things were going on around here, he began to have

an idee your wireless business was a pretty big thing, an' it might be you'd need to stay near it quite a spell. Seein's how we didn't want to get here till after dark, so's to find out whether the Downses were doing as they should, he had plenty of time to think of all the little fixin's that might be needed. What puzzles me is why you didn't tell him what was wanted to put the Hampton boat in commission, for he's allowin' that you an' I shall cruise 'round the island nights, if things look suspicious."

"It's simply a case of forgetting what I should have been exceedingly careful to remember," Paul replied bitterly, "and now it will be necessary to make a trip to Seaview in the old boat."

"Well, don't let that bother you, for you'll have plenty of time; 'cordin' to what your father said he's allowin' to stay here quite a spell so's to make certain that them he hires does what he's laid out."

The two were well soaked with rain by the time they had carried the light sheet-iron stove from the cove to the shanty; but the work of putting it in place did not require many moments, and Mr. Simpson could not have made more than half the circuit of the island before they were seated comfortably in front of a roaring fire, drying their steaming garments.

The interior of the shanty, rude though it was, must have looked decidedly cheerful to Mr. Simpson when, after a tramp of more than an hour, a goodly portion of which time had been spent facing the northeast gale, he opened the door to see his son and Zenas presenting a picture of comfort.

"It's fortunate for all three of us that I remembered to bring over the stove," he said, divesting himself of a goodly portion of his wet garments and hanging them where they would be most likely to dry in a short time, "else we should have had to make our headquarters in the farm-house, which just at present I am free to confess would not be pleasant."

"Oilskins are needed about as bad as a stove," Zenas said with a laugh. "The idea of my startin' off for a summer's work, an' not takin' into consideration the fact that I'd likely be out of doors a good many days when it rained."

"A soaking won't hurt us to-day, since we've a place like this in which to dry off. Now I'm going to give you a chance to see how heavy this gale really is," Mr. Simpson said in a tone which caused his hearers to believe there was something of importance on his mind.

"What's the matter, father? Have you found anything else that appears to be wrong?"

"There's a small schooner of not more than twenty-five or thirty tons hove-to off the southerly end of this island, and I can't understand why she's apparently riding out the storm there instead of coming into the cove. I want Zenas to look at her. Don't think that I am distressing myself too much about what John Ed Bingham may be able to do; but when I saw that craft where there was no good reason, from a seaman's point of view, for her remaining, the thought came into my mind that possibly Bingham might be on board, and was intending to run into the cove to-night."

"That's pretty far fetched for a guess," Zenas replied thoughtfully. "I'm willin' to agree that John Ed will bear watchin' even when he's asleep; but it don't strike me that he's goin' to make any great amount of money tryin' to catch them 'ere foxes, 'cause they won't be caught."

"It is possible to shoot them," Mr. Simpson suggested.

"Yes, but in order to do that you're bound to get a sight of the creeters first, an' though they haven't been on this 'ere island very long, I'll venture to say they've found, or made, holes for themselves long before this. You don't catch a fox facing a northeast gale when he's got his two forepaws to dig with."

"It's more likely that it was John Ed Bingham who came ashore Monday night," Paul interrupted. "He threatened to do mischief, and was headed for this island when I refused him a tow, therefore I am believing it was his footprints we saw in the sand."

"If that is the case," Mr. Simpson said half to himself, "and I'm inclined to believe you are correct, my son, then we have good reason for believing that Mr. Downs and Bingham have more dealings with each other than is agreeable to me. However, regarding that we shall probably know more later. It is our business to keep an eye on the fishing schooner, and the sooner you take a look at her, Zenas, the quicker you will be able to dry your clothing."

Cushing went out into the storm as cheerfully as if bent on pleasure, and Paul asked curiously what his father intended to do regarding the Downs family.

"That's a question I can't answer just at present. I am convinced that they have neglected the work, and yet to turn them away, as I have the right, since they do not own the buildings here, would be to make three enemies, who, knowing the island so well, would be able to do more harm to the foxes than any others. Zenas is to remain with you; that much I have settled on, and what more is to be done in the way of making a change we will decide later."

"Are you troubled because that fishing schooner is laying to off the island?" Paul asked after a long pause, and his father replied promptly:

"I am indeed, although there may be good reasons for her remaining at sea instead of coming into the cove. Yet," he added, as if simply giving words to his thoughts, "it doesn't seem probable that any one who had it in mind to poach on this island would begin operations so soon. I question if half a dozen men beating through the thicket could come upon one of the animals while they are so wild."

Then Mr. Simpson fell silent, as if in deep thought, and no word was spoken for half an hour or more, when he suddenly said:

"As soon as this storm clears away you are to take the power dory and run over to Seaview to get spare fittings for the Hampton boat, as well as oilskins, and anything else which you may think of that will be needed. I wish I could make out what motive prompted the disabling of the big craft."

"It seemed to me, after having seen the footprints on the sand, that John Ed Bingham had done it, in-

tending to come ashore as he afterward did, in order to prevent our chasing him."

"We will hope that is the answer to the question," Mr. Simpson said thoughtfully, "but——"

"Is it in your mind that Mr. Downs or his sons had anything to do with the mischief?" Paul asked when his father, failing to finish the sentence, remained silent.

"I cannot say, my son. It was done for some purpose rather than a simple desire to destroy property, and we are bound to solve the mystery if it so be it is possible."

The entrance of Zenas put an end to further conversation for the time being, and his report was not calculated to reassure the man who had invested such a large amount of money in silver foxes.

"The craft may be a fisherman; but she don't look like it to my eye," Zenas said as he took off his wet coat, filled the stove with wood, and stood where he could receive the full benefit of the heat. "First an' foremost she's only got one boat, an' that a ten-foot dory. As nigh as I could make out, her decks are clean, though of course if she's been fishin' everything would be below when this 'ere storm broke; but why should a sailor heave-to under the lee of this island, when he can run into the cove an' anchor?"

"Perhaps he doesn't know there is a harbor here," Paul suggested, and Zenas replied sharply:

"I'll be bound he's no stranger, hangin' 'round so far out to sea. This 'ere storm has been brewin' four an' twenty hours, an' he'd have been a blind man who

couldn't see that it was time to make for port yesterday afternoon. I'm willing to bet a big apple that within an hour after sundown he'll be crawlin' up to the cove."

"There's nothing to prevent his doing so now, except that he doesn't want us to recognize whoever may be on board," Mr. Simpson suggested.

It was a waste of time to speculate as to why the schooner remained outside when she could have made a harbor, and even though they had been disposed to continue the profitless conversation, there was no further opportunity to do so privately, because at that moment Farmer Downs and Sam entered.

The shanty had not been built to accommodate so many visitors, and once they were inside it really seemed to Paul as if it was not possible for any of them to turn around save by brute force.

"I allow you've seen that 'ere schooner what's hove-to down here to the suthard?" Mr. Downs began by way of opening the conversation, and Mr. Simpson nodded in the affirmative. "I allow her skipper is afraid to go inter the cove."

"Why?" Paul's father asked sharply.

"Cause I've let it be known that you'd set your foot agin anybody landin' on this 'ere island."

"That wouldn't prevent a vessel from making harbor here in a gale."

"Right you are; but some of these 'ere fishermen are kind'er touchy, an' when you let it be known that we wouldn't allow visitors, they've got their backs up, I s'pose."

"Then that schooner is a fisherman, eh?" Zenas asked, and Mr. Downs replied with another question:

"What else could she be?"

"Well, I s'pose she might be a coaster, or almost anything them as owned her pleased."

"She's a fisherman all right," Sam interrupted with an air of wisdom, and turning to Paul, he asked in a low tone, "Have you been workin' the contraption this forenoon?"

"There is no need of it now that father's here, and however much I might want to send a message, it would be impossible until Ned was in the station."

"It kind'er begins to look as though the thing worked, don't it, else your father jest happened to come across here?"

"Put it whichever way you please," Paul replied impatiently. "I don't care whether you believe it works or not, so long as I'm satisfied."

Then Sam became greatly interested in the apparatus; asked many questions concerning the part which this or that wire performed, Paul answering briefly but to the best of his ability, and meanwhile Farmer Downs, apparently ceasing to have any further interest in the schooner, was giving Mr. Simpson the benefit of his views regarding the best method of domesticating foxes.

It was evident to Paul, who strove at the same time to gather what was being said by his elders and reply to Sam's sometimes foolish questions, that the farmer was bent on making himself agreeable to his employer in order, as the lad believed, to efface any unpleasant

memories of the neglect of duty during the night previous.

Nothing of particular importance or interest was said, although the visitors remained until the horn sounded for dinner, and then all repaired to the farm-house.

After the meal was at an end Ernest went to the shanty with Mr. Simpson, Zenas and Paul, and at no time during the afternoon were the three alone.

Twice Zenas went out to see if the schooner remained in the same relative position, and returned with the information that she was still hove-to but drifting so rapidly to the southward as to be lost to view at times amid the driving rain.

Not until the evening meal had been eaten was anything said concerning the work of the night, and then Sam asked Mr. Simpson timidly if it was expected that he and Ernest were to patrol the island while the storm was raging so furiously.

"Because of failing to find you when I landed, my belief is that you have not been living up to the agreement, so far as keeping watch is concerned, therefore until I return to Seaview you may do as you choose during the hours of darkness."

"Surely you are not countin' on standin' watch while sich a gale as this is ragin'?" Mrs. Downs asked, and Mr. Simpson avoided a direct reply by saying:

"It hardly seems necessary."

"An' you'll sleep here, of course, all hands of you," the good woman continued. "You can have our spare room, the same as when you were here before."

"One or more of us will probably use it, Mrs. Downs; but it is possible that we shall not go to bed until late, therefore you may kindly leave the door unlocked."

"Wa'al, I reckon we shall," Mr. Downs replied with a hearty laugh, "seein's how we ain't in the habit of lockin' up here nights, where there's nobody to break in, an' nothin' to steal if so be robbers were prowlin' 'round. Come in whenever you get ready, Mr. Simpson, an' mother'll leave a lamp burning for you."

Because of the rain, which was now descending more furiously than during the earlier part of the day, Paul's father borrowed from the Downs family suits of oilskins for himself, his son and Zenas, and thus protected against the weather the three started toward the shanty; but after having walked fifty yards or more Mr. Simpson halted as he said:

"Now, then, Zenas, go down to the southerly end of the island and see if you can make out whether the schooner remains there. She will, of course, have a riding light out. Then come back to the cove, where you will find me near the Downs dory. I'll turn her over to make a shelter. You are to go to the station, Paul, and try to get into communication with Ned. If you succeed, ask him to ascertain, if possible, whether any strange schooner has put out from Seaview this morning."

Paul did as he was commanded, but without anticipating any result; therefore was he most agreeably surprised on arriving to receive a reply immediately after sending out his call.

"I have been here at the station waiting for you since five o'clock," Ned telegraphed. "Is anything going wrong?"

"Father and Zenas got ashore last night without being seen, and the Downses are in a fine state of anxiety, most likely fearing they will be discharged," Paul wrote hurriedly. "Father wants to know if any schooner left Seaview this morning?"

"What has he got on his mind?" Ned asked.

"There is a small craft hove-to off the southerly end of the island, and we can't understand why she's there."

"I'll try and find out. When will you be in the station again?"

"All the evening. Call any time."

"O. K." came the reply, and then the clicking of the instrument ceased, Paul understanding that his friend had gone out to make an effort at getting the desired information.

During more than an hour Paul remained alone in the shanty, hearing only the whistling of the wind amid the apparatus, and the downpour of rain upon the roof of the rude structure, and then came the signal for which he had been listening:

"Have you learned anything?" he ticked off as soon as Ned ceased calling and was ready to receive.

"Captain Tobi Thompson says that last evening, after your father left, a small fore-and-aft schooner put in; two strangers came ashore to Mansfield's store, asked about the fox farm and your father. Schooner

was here at ten o'clock last night, but must have sailed before daylight this morning. Anything more?"

"That's all father wanted to know just now. Am coming over after spare fittings for the Hampton boat when storm clears away."

"I shall be in the station to-morrow seven A.M." Ned answered, and Paul gave the signal of good-night, after which he switched off his instrument, shut down the engine, and made snug until the time came when he might call up his friend again.

Then he waited, expecting each moment his father would return, until to his surprise, on looking at his watch, he found that it was nearly ten o'clock.

Zenas and Mr. Simpson had been out in the raging storm nearly four hours, and it seemed to the lad certain that something of importance must have occurred, else they would have taken refuge in the shanty long before this, for it was not a night one would cheerfully select for a stroll on Barren island.

His first impulse was to go in search of them, and this desire came upon him so strongly that despite the fact he had been ordered to remain at the station, he set off at a rapid pace in the direction of the cove, stumbling now and then over the loose rocks in the path, and again nearly falling headlong when the furious blasts forced him a few paces out of the beaten track.

It was a short but laborious journey, and he was thoroughly weary when, after battling against the elements twenty minutes or more, he came upon the overturned dory and called his father by name.

"What has brought you out here?" Mr. Simpson asked in a low tone. "I thought you were to stay at the station."

"Ned has just sent a reply to your inquiry," Paul replied as he crawled beneath the dory to shelter himself from the wind and rain, and then he repeated what had come to him by wireless.

"The schooner which has been hove-to is now standing up evidently counting to come into the cove, and we intend to find out why she's here," Mr. Simpson said in explanation. "You had better go to the farm-house and get what sleep you can, or else lie down in the station, where you'll be dry and comfortable."

"I had rather stay here, sir, if you don't object."

"Very well; do as you please. It won't be very comfortable, and I am not expecting that anything of an exciting nature will happen."

"If it don't I'll miss my guess," Zenas said grimly. "A craft doesn't lay hove-to in mid-ocean, so to speak, all day, an' then crawl up to land after dark, unless there's mischief of some kind brewin'."

Paul was of the same opinion, and therefore resolved to remain where he was for a certain time at least.

By dint of questioning Zenas he learned that the latter had, while patrolling the shore at the southern end of the island, seen a light on board a craft of some kind, which he believed to be the same vessel they had watched during the day, and after a certain length of time became convinced beyond the possibility of a mis-

take that she was endeavoring to gain harbor in the cove.

"Of course I can't swear that the schooner what's off here now is the same we've seen since noon; but accordin' to my figurin' it's odds that she is, and I'm lookin' to see quite a lively time before mornin'."

"Do you believe John Ed Bingham is on board of her?" Paul asked in a whisper, and Zenas replied promptly:

"I ain't botherin' my head about that old smuggler a little bit. He may be with the gang, an' then agin it's possible he's a hundred miles off by this time. He's just like a flea; you think you can put your finger right on him, an' he ain't there. Whoever is aboard the craft, 'cordin' to my way of thinkin', is comin' here either to cook up a plan with old Downs, or else to see if there's any show of gettin' a fox pelt that's worth a couple of hundred dollars."

"But they can't expect to do any hunting in the night; that would be ridiculous."

"I don't know what they're expectin'; but I've set it down as a fact that our business is to keep a sharp eye on 'em. If so be they're only disabled sailormen puttin' in here for harbor, why there won't be any harm done if we hang 'round a spell longer."

While Zenas and Paul had been conversing Mr. Simpson crept out from beneath the shelter, and five minutes later he returned, saying in a whisper as he forced his way under the dory:

"The vessel is just coming into the cove. Cease talking, and if any one should come ashore, we'll fol-

low them without exposing ourselves to view, if possible. There is even a chance these may be honest fishermen, who have not heard that visitors are forbidden the island."

"If they let go their ground tackle with a rush, I'll allow there's a chance they may be honest; but we'll see how they come to anchor," Zenas replied, crawling out from under the dory until he could have as fair a view of the cove as darkness would permit, and Paul, eager to see all that might be happening, followed his example.

Five minutes later it was possible, even in the darkness of the night, to distinguish the outlines of a vessel's spars as she stood in until nearly abreast where the watchers were hiding, and then noiselessly as a shadow came to a standstill.

"They have taken mighty good care that nobody should hear 'em let go the anchor," Zenas whispered, and Paul's heart beat wildly with excitement, for he fancied that now was come the time when poachers were making ready to work mischief on Silver Fox Farm.

During what seemed to Paul to be a very long time no sound was heard, and Zenas called attention to the fact that the craft had anchored with all canvas, save the jib, standing.

"Looks honest, don't it, eh?" he whispered.

Then the creaking of oars could be heard now and then even amid the noises of the tempest, and Mr. Simpson gave the word that they were to creep out from their place of shelter, crouching low upon the

sand as they did so lest their bodies should be seen against the sky.

This move had been made none too soon, for when he was ten paces from the dory, creeping toward the head of the cove, it was possible for Paul to see a small boat pulled up on the beach by three men, who, after their task was done, at once hurried away in the direction of the farm-house.

"We'll follow them," Mr. Simpson said, and there was little need for him to speak in a whisper because the shrieking of the tempest would have drowned any ordinary noise.

"Don't you think it would be a good idee for me to stay here? You and Paul can do the followin' an' it don't seem to me well that we lose all sight of what may be goin' on around this 'ere cove," Zenas suggested.

"Very well, stay here. Come with me, Paul," and Mr. Simpson hurried away in the direction taken by the visitors, being careful, however, not to get so near their heels that there could be any danger of being seen.

The strangers were fully two hundred feet in advance of Mr. Simpson and Paul when they arrived at the farm-house, and that they were well acquainted with the place could be told from the fact that instead of making any effort to arouse the family, who, because of the absence of lights, were apparently asleep, they entered the house boldly by the kitchen door.

The building stood, as has been said, in the open, and there was no place where the watchers might

screen themselves from view, save just inside the shed where was stowed firewood. This they did, and when thus partially hidden Paul whispered:

"We can't hear anything that may be said in the house unless we creep up to the window."

"That we will do after they have lighted the lamp," his father replied, and the two stood there minute after minute, waiting for some token that the Downs family were astir, but seeing nothing.

No lights shone from the window; no noise could be heard from inside the dwelling, and Paul was beginning to ask himself whether they were not mistaken in the belief that three men had entered the house, when the door was opened swiftly and a single figure came out.

As a matter of course it was not possible to distinguish the features of this person who had come so stealthily from Mr. Downs's dwelling; but it could be seen that he disappeared in the direction of the cove, and when Paul started forward as if to follow him, his father said, laying a restraining hand upon his shoulder:

"We'll wait for the other two, lad. If that fellow has gone down to the boat Zenas can give us an account of all he does."

CHAPTER VIII

A QUESTION OF VERACITY

As a matter of course Paul could not well carry on any extended conversation with his father while they were in hiding so near the house; but he was burning with the desire to hear what guess might be made as to the reason why only one of the visitors had gone away, and also why the Downs family failed to display any signs of being awake.

The house remained as when they first approached, with not a thread of light to be seen, or the slightest noise betokening that the inmates were awake; yet certain it was, unless both Paul and his father had been deceived by their eyes, that three men had entered fully half an hour before the first took his departure.

Paul fancied the storm was subsiding. It seemed to him that the wind no longer came in furious gusts, and that the rain was falling in less volume, yet, even if such was the case, the gale was still sufficiently violent to cause him no little discomfort. But for the protection afforded by the oilskins borrowed from the Downs family, he would have suffered severely, for the shed afforded only a partial shelter from the wind, and the water ran in tiny streams through each of the many crevices in the roof.

The moments passed, as it appeared to Paul, exceedingly slow, and yet his father gave no token of impatience even when the lad was positive nearly an hour

had elapsed since the single visitor took his departure. Standing like a statue just within the shadow of the opening to the shed, Mr. Simpson remained with his eyes fixed upon the seemingly abandoned house, until Paul ventured to ask:

"How much longer do you count on staying here, sir?"

"Until we can learn something concerning the two visitors who are yet inside. If you are tired, go back to Zenas; you will most likely find him under the dory."

"But you might need me here, sir."

"That is hardly probable. I fancy the men will go aboard the schooner directly they bring the visit to a close, and I shall do no more than follow. There isn't any probability they will attempt to molest the foxes in the darkness, for the very good reason that the animals could not be found."

"Shall we wait on the shore for you?"

"Yes, Zenas must do so; but you may go to bed whenever you feel so disposed."

"I don't count on losing sight of whatever may be going on here to-night," Paul replied grimly, and his father added with something very like mirth in his tones:

"If this blackness holds you're not likely to see very much, no matter how lively matters move. Remember to listen carefully while walking to and fro, lest you run afoul of these visitors."

Paul would not have left his father if there had been any show of life in the Downs home; but while the

house remained as if deserted it seemed to him useless to waste time watching it.

Moving cautiously in accordance with his father's instructions, he went slowly toward the shore of the cove, being obliged almost literally to "feel" his way, and after stumbling about, sometimes on the path, and again floundering among the rocks and sand, he came upon the overturned dory.

"Zenas," he whispered, as he bent over to peer beneath the boat, and Cushing's head immediately appeared between the gunwale and the sand.

"Where's your father?"

"Up at the house waiting for the two men to come out."

"I'm thinkin' he'll stay there quite a spell. One of 'em came down here a while ago, put off to the schooner, an' she has left the harbor."

"The schooner gone!" Paul cried in astonishment.

"That's what. She went out half an hour ago, an' I've been wonderin' why your father didn't come to tell me I might turn in, for it's a dead fact that the other two men don't count on leaving here this night. What have you seen?"

"Nothing after the three men went into the house, nor did we hear the slightest sound until one of them came out and disappeared as if on his way to this cove. There hasn't been a light in the building."

"Did the men have much trouble gettin' in?"

"They went in the kitchen door, as if it was their own home. So far as we could say, not a member of the Downs family awakened."

"Is that so?" Zenas said half to himself. "Old friends, eh, an' took the trouble to lay hove-to in a livin' gale all day for the sake of comin' here after dark when they wouldn't disturb anybody! Looks as if the whole thing had been cooked an' dried, eh? It wouldn't surprise me a little bit if the fellow whom you say landed here Monday night came in order to make arrangements for this same visit. What's your father goin' to do now?"

"He is watching for the two men to come out."

"I reckon we may as well go up an' tell him it's time to knock off work. Them men won't show themselves now the schooner's gone — That is, not for quite a spell, an' it's up to us to say how soon that shall be. Come on; we'll talk it over when we're snug in the shanty."

Paul was so perplexed and bewildered at learning the schooner had left port, that he could make no protest even though it seemed to him that his father's orders should be obeyed even to the extent of remaining under the overturned dory all night. He meekly followed Zenas, when that young man came boldly out from the place of shelter and walked toward the house as if he was the only person on Barren island.

"Be careful you don't come upon the men, and thus let them know that we've been on watch," he cautioned, and Zenas laughed aloud as he said:

"I'll eat my head an' yours, too, if the visitors an' the Downs family ain't snorin' their level best this very minute. They're takin' it easy, an' we're gettin' all the tough part of the work."

"But why does Mr. Downs allow them to stay, when he knows that father refuses to let any one even come ashore for a few minutes?" Paul asked in bewilderment.

"I reckon that's somethin' your father is bound to find out before we're many hours older, 'less he's willin' to see the fox business go to everlastin' smash. Now we'll creep up on the shed kind'er soft, for there's jest a chance, in spite of my belief, that old Daniel has got a longer head than I've given him the credit of havin'."

Without making more noise than was drowned by the whistling of the wind and the roaring of the surf, the two approached the shed until Mr. Simpson stepped out into view, leading them at a distance from the building that he might ask in an angry tone, without danger of being overheard by those in the house:

"Why have you left your post, Zenas?"

"'Cause there's nothin' to watch. The schooner put to sea nigh an hour ago, after one of the men went on board, an' I'm allowin' that you'll be coolin' your heels for nothin' if you stay here keepin' an eye on the old shack. Daniel Downs is a little ahead of us in this 'ere deal, though the odds are agin his pullin' out 'cordin' to schedule."

Mr. Simpson remained silent and motionless a full minute, and then, telling Zenas and Paul to follow him, he led the way to the shanty.

After having been exposed to the storm so long, the little hut presented a most homely appearance when

a fire had been built in the stove and the lantern lighted; but Mr. Simpson was not in the humor to enjoy it.

"You two are to stay here. If I fail to put in an appearance when you go to breakfast to-morrow morning, and any one asks for me, say that I declared my intention of remaining in bed a long while. Do not linger around the farm-house; but having had breakfast come directly back here, and get in communication with Ned Bartlett to learn if he has heard anything regarding the strange schooner."

"Where are you going, father?" Paul asked, puzzled to understand why such detailed instructions should be given.

"I intend to sleep in the farm-house; but it isn't probable that I shall get up early enough to breakfast with the family. You may bring over here something in the way of food, in case I should be hungry before dinner-time."

Then, without waiting for further questions, Mr. Simpson went out into the storm and the darkness once more, and Paul turned to Zenas with an expression of bewilderment on his face.

"What benefit will it be to sleep in the farm-house? I suppose, though, that it'll be more comfortable to have a whole bed to himself than pack into my bunk with you and me."

"I'm allowin' he ain't thinkin' very much of his own comfort jest at this time," Zenas replied with a purring laugh as he took off his wet garments to hang them in front of the fire, and with a blanket around his shoul-

ders in the stead of a dressing gown, proceeded to fill and light his pipe.

"But what good will it do for him to sleep there?" Paul asked in perplexity.

"That is as may be. 'Cordin' to the way I look at it, he figgers that the house is so small they'll have trouble in hidin' two men any great while, an' by pretendin' to be sleepin' in bed he may hear somethin' that'll be to his advantage. Of course there's the chance that nothin' will come of it; but I can't see how he could do anythin' different, seein's he's bound to look after them 'ere foxes."

"I wish he had never gone into the business, or, if he couldn't keep out of it, that he'd hired people who were more honest than the Downs family appear to be," Paul said with a sigh, and Zenas added, as if the idea afforded him considerable amusement:

"More honest than they *appear* to be! Why, lad, from what little I've seen I can take my solemn 'davy that the old man an' his sons are so crooked they couldn't sleep comfortably in a straight bed. I'm allowin' that at first they counted to play fair; but somebody of the same kidney as John Ed Bingham, if it wasn't the old scoundrel himself, has got after 'em with a scheme to make money quick. It strikes me that two or three hundred dollars would buy Daniel mighty easy. He's sich a thick head that he wouldn't stop to figger how much might come to him an' his family in the way of wages before a crop of pelts could be harvested; but would only think of the big pile to be hauled in if he turned traitor. But jest you wait, lad.

It'll be a long day before either he or his cronies can get hold of them 'ere creeters, an' twixt now and then we ought'er be able to lay him by the heels."

It really seemed to Paul as if Zenas was thoroughly well pleased because danger threatened the fox farming. He smoked vigorously, pausing now and then to laugh in a purring sort of way, or to strike his knee a resounding blow as if he had suddenly hit upon some means of outwitting Mr. Downs and his visitors.

"Any one might think you were well pleased because there is a chance that father may lose his investment here," Paul said after he had undressed and crawled between the blankets, preparatory to sleeping.

"It ain't exactly that way, lad. I'm kind'er tickled 'cause it looks as if we might have considerable excitement. When I hired out to your father the only trouble in my mind was that it would be mortally dull, knockin' 'round this forsaken place day after day an' night after night; but if old Daniel keeps on tryin' to play funny games, I'm allowin' we'll pass the time in fair shape. Why don't you go to sleep?"

"Ain't you coming to bed?"

"Not for quite a spell; I've got to chew this 'ere thing over a while, so's to get my bearin's; but once that has been done, I'm the biggest chump that ever stepped foot in Seaview if Daniel Downs an' his precious boys can get the best of me."

Despite the excitement under which he was naturally laboring, Paul's eyes closed in slumber some time before Zenas had finished "chewing the matter over,"

and it was not until the sun had risen next morning that he again became conscious of his surroundings.

Then Zenas shook him into wakefulness with the announcement:

"It is past six, lad, an' the horn has sounded twice to let us know breakfast's ready. I kind'er hated to rouse you, seein's how you was reelin' it off so hearty-like; but we've got to show up, whether we're hungry or not, to prevent 'em from routin' your father out."

Paul arose from the bunk, stretched himself sleepily, and Zenas opened the door as a means of banishing any further desire for slumber from his eyes.

The sun was shining brightly, the breeze hardly strong enough to raise a feather, and the dancing sea sparkled and shone in the golden light as if it had never raised its myriad heads against the rocky coast of Barren island.

"My, but it's a fine day!" Paul cried as, removing his clothing, he ran to the head of Swallow-Tailed cove for a sea bath.

Ten minutes later he had finished his salt-water toilet, and was asking Zenas if anything unusual had occurred after he fell asleep.

"I don't allow that a thing went wrong from the time that 'ere schooner left the cove. 'Long 'bout midnight I took a turn 'round, goin' as far as the farmhouse; but everythin' was quiet. The storm petered out 'bout then, an' before I'd fell asleep the stars were shinin'. I'd like to know if your father got on the track of any funny business."

"We shall soon know, for he will surely show him-

self before dinner-time. Let's hurry down to the house for breakfast. I must be back here when Ned calls me at seven."

Mr. Downs and his sons had broken their fast when Paul and Zenas arrived at the house, as was learned from Mrs. Downs, who added, as she answered their questions concerning the remainder of her family:

"I've been wonderin' if I hadn't better wake your father. Sam looked inter the spare room, an' said he 'peared to be asleep; but it seems a pity for him to lose his breakfast."

"He was very tired when he left the shanty, and said he didn't intend to get up until nearly noon, therefore you had better leave him alone," Paul replied, and it was on the tip of his tongue to ask if Mrs. Downs had heard any disturbance during the night; but, fortunately, he checked himself before the words were uttered.

"Father an' the boys have gone out to catch fish for the foxes," the good woman said after a long pause, during which she had heaped the plates of her guests so high with food that there appeared to be an ample supply for at least three meals. "In case your father should want 'em after he gets up, I reckon they can be found in the cove; that's a master place for cunners at flood tide."

To this neither Paul nor Zenas made any reply, and Mrs. Downs asked a moment later, while an expression of anxiety came over her face:

"Do you know whether your father counts on goin' back to Seaview to-day?"

"He hasn't told us; but I believe he will wait here until I have been over to get the fittings that are needed to put the Hampton boat into commission again," Paul replied as he rose from the table, his hunger satisfied, and this time there could be no question but that the good woman looked disturbed in mind.

"It don't suit her to have your father hangin' 'round here," Zenas said when he and Paul were returning to the station. "It ain't the easiest thing in the world to keep two men hidden in that small house, an' it stands to reason old Daniel wouldn't dare let them out while the boss is here."

"It's hard to persuade myself I didn't dream all that took place last night," Paul said thoughtfully. "It doesn't seem possible Mr. Downs would dare to play such a trick, knowing what the consequences would be if he was discovered."

"I reckon he didn't stop to think of that part of the business when he agreed to whatever plan is on foot," and Zenas added with a laugh, "It don't take me very long to make up my mind that what went on here last night was no dream, for I'm feelin' as if I'd been soaked. It must be nigh to seven o'clock, eh?"

"It lacks fifteen minutes," Paul said, after looking at his watch. "We may as well get ready for business, although I don't fancy Ned has been able to get much information for us."

When the apparatus was in working order once more Paul sent out the call for Ned, and within a few

moments of the hour named the following words were clicked off in the shanty, Zenas standing in open-mouthed astonishment, for this was the first exhibition of wireless telegraphy he had ever seen:

"Captain Tobi Thompson says the schooner is now in the harbor. She carried away her topmast in the gale; must stay here two days for repairs."

"I am coming over very soon," Paul replied, Zenas watching his every movement closely as he worked the key.

"Don't fail to see me," came the message from Ned.

"O. K. If you can't get me at noon you will know I have started."

Then came the good-by from the Seaview station, and as Paul closed the trunk containing his instruments, Zenas said with a long-drawn sigh, as if so much of mystery wearied him:

"It don't seem possible that you've been talkin' with Ned Bartlett at Seaview, an' I can't make head nor tail of the whole thing."

"That's what Mr. Downs and his sons say. They are not yet absolutely certain that I have been able to send or receive a message, because there are no wires connecting the two instruments."

"It would puzzle a wiser man than any of them are ever likely to be; but I'd really like to know somethin' 'bout the bloomin' thing, for it's the darkest kind of a twist to me."

"We haven't anything to do until father comes, and if you care to listen I'll read a little from a book I've got, which I brought with me in case something went

wrong that I couldn't understand, when I'd have the solution at hand."

"Go ahead; I'll listen as long as you're willin' to read," and Zenas seated himself on the bunk as he proceeded leisurely to fill his pipe.

"Here is something which may give you an idea of how the clicking of the key can be heard many miles away, even as you hear it here," and Paul read, "A type of wave of which we are constantly receiving impressions through our ears, but which is more difficult to analyze than the ocean wave, is the sound-wave in the atmosphere. Waves of sound are invisible, and hence the difficulty we experience in becoming familiar with their forms, speed and other properties. We learn that sound in air is a disturbance in its density and pressure which moves through the air at a definite speed. If we fire a pistol in the air, the explosion in the barrel displaces the air, or compresses it, in the immediate neighborhood of the discharge. The zone of compression moves off into surrounding air with substantially the same speed in all directions, if the air is calm, and is followed immediately by a zone of expended air; just as a hollow or depression follows a hump or elevation in an ocean wave."

"Do you understand the idea of sound-waves from what I have read?" Paul asked as he paused to look at Zenas, and the latter replied doubtfully:

"I can't say as I've got the whole idee dead plain in my mind; but drive ahead, an' perhaps I'll pick up a smatterin' of it."

Then Paul continued to read, selecting paragraphs

here and there which he believed would convey a general idea of the subject:

"Air is a material fluid. It forms an ocean on the surface of this earth, and we live at or near the bottom of this air-ocean. It is generally believed that all space, including the interior of solid bodies, is permeated by an immaterial fluid called the universal ether. The ether is just as invisible as the air. It does not directly appeal to any sense, but it is much easier to assume its presence everywhere than to deny its existence. If we take a vacuum-tube, that is to say, a sealed glass tube from the interior of which the air has been almost entirely removed, it can be shown experimentally that sound cannot pass across the interior of the tube, but light passes across it, and so does heat and force. We cannot believe that these activities are transmitted through absolutely empty space. Something must transmit them, for they are transmitted at definite speeds. This something is named the ether. Beyond its powers of transmitting energy, hardly anything is yet known about the ether. Its structure and the manner in which it permeates space are still unsolved riddles."

"Hold on right there," Zenas cried as he sprang to his feet, "what's the use of readin' any more when the man what wrote the book don't know, an' says he don't, anythin' about it?"

"He knows that certain causes will produce certain results, and that is enough for the time being," Paul replied with a laugh.

"Well, I ain't achin' to find out what nobody knows.

I'd like to hear how you contrive to send messages from here to Seaview when there ain't any wires for them to travel on."

"In order to understand it you must first know through what medium the sounds are transmitted, and the writer of this book claims that we send the dots and dashes of the Morse alphabet, which is made up of the symbols used by telegraphers on land, through the ether, rather than the air, or through the combination of both. Listen: 'When it is agreed that the ether is a universal fluid or medium in which all matter swims, so to speak, many things may be accounted for which otherwise we could not even attempt to explain. Electricity and magnetism, for example, may be accounted for in a general way. Just as wind is a particular energized condition of the air, so both electricity and magnetism are particular energized conditions of the universal ether, which underlies the air and everything else. We cannot at present say, for example, that electricity is the same kind of motion of the ether that wind is of the air, because we do not yet comprehend the nature of the ether——'"

"Here comes your father," Zenas interrupted as he opened the door of the shanty, "an' I reckon it's 'bout time, for I'm gettin' all mixed up with air an' ether. Some day when you have a chance, s'pose you tell me 'bout sendin' messages without wires."

"That's just what I have started to do; but before you can understand anything about it you must have some idea of the force, or power, which is used," Paul replied laughingly.

"An' the man what wrote that book says right out plump an' plain that he don't understand anythin' 'bout it," Zenas growled as if he had personal cause for complaint against the writer.

"He claims to know what is done in the ether, without being able to explain it. After you have learned by what medium the wave-sounds are made, then it will be possible to give you an idea of wireless telegraphy, and we'll talk it over some other time."

At this point Mr. Simpson entered the shanty, and before Paul could speak he asked anxiously:

"Have you had any word from Seaview?"

"Ned says the schooner is in the harbor. She carried away her topmast, and will have to lay there a couple of days making repairs."

"You will be obliged to go across to get fittings before the Hampton boat can be used. Why not start now? The sea is not running very high."

"I can make the voyage all right in the old dory," Paul said, as he looked out on the dancing water.

"Very well; take Zenas with you, and try to get back before morning. I want you to go to Captain Tobi Thompson and ask him to learn who owns the schooner, and who is on board of her. Tell him that it is of the greatest importance for me to know all that may be gathered about her and her crew. Do not say anything of last night's happenings, and warn Ned on the same point. Can you start at once?"

For reply Paul first made certain his instruments had been left in such condition that they could not

readily be disturbed or injured, and then stepped out of the shanty, calling to Zenas:

"Come on. I reckon we shall have a spell of bailing before we can get under way, for the dory must be half full of water."

Mr. Simpson followed his son, taking him affectionately by the arm as he said:

"Get such things as you may need to put the Hampton boat in commission, oilskins for all of us, and whatever else you think may be needed during the next two weeks. Tell your mother that I shall not hurry home."

"Did you hear or see anything at the farm-house?"

"I didn't get a glimpse of the visitors, but heard sufficient to convince me that they are in a room over the kitchen. Mr. Downs went to that apartment this morning after Sam looked into the spare chamber to see if I was occupying it. The visitors had been warned that I was in the house, therefore took good care not to make a noise."

"Did you have any talk with Mr. Downs?"

"He was out fishing when I came downstairs, or, at least, his wife said so. I intend to spend the greater portion of my time around the farm-house until you get back, when Zenas can take my place."

"You believe Mr. Downs is ready to do a mischief to the foxes, in spite of the fact that you have agreed to pay him and his sons good wages for a long while?"

"There is no other way by which matters can be explained; but it suits my purpose for the time being to let him believe I have every confidence in his inten-

tions," Mr. Simpson replied, and then they were arrived at that portion of the beach where the motor-dory had been hauled high up on the sand.

The little craft was, as Paul had supposed, well filled with water, for rain had fallen during eighteen hours in great quantity, and this it was necessary to remove before the voyage could be begun.

Mr. Simpson lent a hand at the work, and within half an hour everything was ready for the departure.

"Be careful not to speak of what we have seen and believe," Paul's father cautioned him as the dory was pushed off into deep water. "Make all haste possible; but procure everything that may be needed, and impress on Captain Tobi's mind the necessity for getting all the details concerning the schooner and her crew, even though you are forced to remain in Seaview until morning."

"We shall go right up to the shanty when we get back, and wait there, if you are not to be seen," Zenas announced, and Mr. Simpson replied:

"If you do not return until after dark, I shall probably be at the farm-house, for it is my intention to retire early, and there will be no need to disturb me."

"We're off," Paul shouted cheerily as he started the motor while Zenas took the helm, and Mr. Simpson, without waiting to see them pass out of the cove, went rapidly up the shore in the direction of Mr. Downs's home.

"I'm allowin' there won't much go on while we're away that he don't have an eye on," Zenas said with a purring laugh. "The boarders in the room over the

kitchen will be likely to have quite a warm time of it before they get a chance to move around very lively, for it must be mighty hot up there this weather when there's a blazing fire in the cook-stove."

The dory made good speed once the full power of the motor was on, and Zenas had hardly more than ceased speaking when she was gliding out of the cove, coming speedily within hail of Mr. Downs and his sons, who were fishing a short distance below the southerly point.

"Hello, what's up?" Sam yelled in surprise. "Where are you goin'?"

"Over to Seaview," Paul answered curtly.

"Anythin' wrong?"

"I've got to have some fittings for the Hampton boat if I ever expect to run her again, and I'm going for them."

"I should kind'er thought your father would have gone with you," Mr. Downs screamed, and Paul fancied he could detect a note of anxiety in the old man's voice. "Do you know how long he allows to stay?"

"He hasn't told me anything about it," Paul shouted, and then the dory was so far away that further conversation was impossible.

"Yes, I reckon you would like to know how long Mr. Simpson counts on stayin', Daniel Downs. An' a couple of your friends what are roostin' in the attic over your kitchen would give considerable to know the same thing," Zenas cried softly, and he indulged in a long spell of purring laughter as he pictured in his mind the perspiring visitors.

CHAPTER IX

WIRELESS TELEGRAPHY

"How long will it take us to make the run?" Zenas asked when his mirth had subsided somewhat.

"The dory can do about nine miles an hour. The motor is heavier than one ordinarily sees in a craft of her size, and shoves her through the water at a good speed."

"I should say it did, if she can run at that gait," Zenas said half to himself, and after waiting a few moments without hearing anything more from him, Paul said with a quizzical expression:

"We can count on being alone two hours and a half, and surely we don't want to go all over the island affair again, so suppose I try to make you understand something more about wireless telegraphy?"

"Somethin' more?" Zenas repeated with a grin. "What you've told me already I could put in my eye without winkin', an' if you don't get ahead any faster than when you read out of that 'ere book, I shan't be overly wise by the time we get inter port."

"I brought the book with me in order to read more from it, and while trying to give you a little information, brush up what I already know, or think I know, on the subject. If you remember, we were told in the book that electric waves exist in the ether, but that fact was not discovered until the year 1888, when Professor Hertz demonstrated it by a simplified form of the ap-

paratus used to-day, save that he used no antenna or ground connections. Now, Zenas, listen intently, and try to remember what you hear," Paul said warningly as he opened his book and read:

"Professor Hertz was the first to attempt seriously what Professor Clerk Maxwell in 1867 had prophesied would be accomplished sooner or later. Maxwell had deduced his prophecy from abstruse mathematical considerations, and had predicted the properties of electric waves, which he said would be found to be identical with those of heat and light. Heat, light, and Hertzian radiations are, in fact, electric waves of different frequencies. Hertz verified all Maxwell's predictions by experiments made with the somewhat unwieldy apparatus which the dimensions of his transmitter detector necessitated. The detector was simply a large circle of wire, at one point in which there was a gap between two very small spheres. A screw adjustment was used to vary the distance separating the balls, between which the electric-motive forces induced by the waves manifested themselves in the form of minute sparks.

"In about the year 1890, Professor Edouard Branly investigated the effect of Leyden jar discharges on metallic powders, the resistance of which was found to be greatly decreased after the passage of sparks in the neighborhood.

"In 1895, Sir Oliver Lodge detected waves from an oscillator over a distance of about forty yards, using a filings tube coherer, a galvanometer, and a cell. The coherer consisted of a tube containing metallic filings

into which two wires were thrust so that their ends nearly touched. To restore the coherer to its original insulating condition after it had become conducting, it was necessary to shake up the filings by giving the tube a slight tap. In the same year Professor Popoff of Cronstadt used and described apparatus in which an ordinary lightning conductor was employed for receiving waves, a coherer being inserted between it and the earth. Across the coherer a cell was connected in series with a relay, the contacts of which formed part of a circuit containing a bell and a battery. The hammer of the bell was so placed as to tap the coherer and restore it to an insulating condition.

"In the same year, meaning 1895, Captain Jackson, of the English navy, carried out a series of very interesting experiments, and succeeded in signalling between ships. In 1896, Mr. Marconi took out a patent for 'Improvements in Transmitting Electrical Impulses and signals and in Apparatus therefore.' This patent claims the previously known coherer and tapping device, and also one or two novelties of a minor kind, but the real invention appears to have been the use of a long vertical wire attached to one side of a spark-gap, the other side being connected to earth."

"Look here, Paul," Zenas interrupted at this point, "when you get ready to tell me about what you call wireless telegraphy, I'll be glad to listen; but my head ain't strong enough to take in any more of the bloomin' guff. What's it all about, anyway?"

"I've been reading you the history of the discovery, and if all that hadn't happened it wouldn't have been

possible for me to learn from Ned, while he was at Seaview and I on Barren island, that the schooner which came here in the night is lying at harbor with a splintered topmast."

"All that may be; but when you talk to me 'bout coherers an' that sort of thing, how do I know what you're tryin' to drive at?"

"Haven't I just been reading that the coherer Mr. Marconi uses is a plain glass tube filled with metallic filings?"

"Why not say so, then, an' not use a high-soundin' name that a fellow like me wouldn't know from a hole in the ground? I've got all the information on wireless telegraphy that I can stand up under this day. Later, perhaps, after I've had time to grow a bit stronger, I may be able to take another dose. What do you count on doin' first after we strike Seaview?"

"I'll go directly to Captain Thompson, and after delivering father's message I shall hunt up Ned."

"What am I to be doin' all that time?"

"Suppose you go to Mansfield's and buy three suits of oilskins? Then you might run over to the machine shop, and ask them to lay out these fittings for me," and Paul gave to Zenas a slip of paper on which was set down that which he needed to put the Hampton boat in commission. "Ned and I will meet you at the machinist's."

"All right, my hearty, an' s'posen you an' young Bartlett unload yourselves of wireless telegraphy, so's there won't be any show of your firin' a lot of big words inter me on the passage over."

Paul promised laughingly to do as Zenas desired, or at least that he would not read to him anything more from the book during this day, and then the two fell to discussing matters on Barren island, speculating as to what would be the result when Mr. Simpson came upon the men in hiding, as he must do at some time if a strict watch over the farm-house was kept.

In the meanwhile the old dory was "eating up the miles" at as good a rate of speed as she had ever shown, and it was not yet noon when the visitors stepped out on the pier in Seaview.

Leaving to Zenas the task of caring for the boat, Paul hurried away to find Captain Tobi Thompson, succeeding so well in his mission that within ten minutes from the time of coming ashore he had repeated to the old sailor his father's message.

"I'll do all I can, my lad, an' it stands to reason that if a man is so minded an' willing to use his tongue, he ought to find out a good bit before that 'ere schooner is in shape to leave her moorings; but it ain't reasonable to agree that I can get the facts together very quick."

"I hardly fancy father expected I could bring back the information; but if you'll tell Ned Bartlett what you have learned, he'll telegraph it to me."

"So you two boys have really gone to work an' rigged up a couple of wireless stations, eh?"

"Yes, sir, and they are working fairly well," Paul replied modestly.

"Well now, that's what I call amazin'," Captain

Tobi said in a voice as loud and hearty as if he had been giving some order from his own quarter-deck. "It's amazin' any way you look at it. First that you two lads should be able to build the stations and get the thing in runnin' order without help from outsiders, and then again the idee of sending messages without wires is equally amazin'. Why, in my day if a man had come aboard ship and told me that such a thing would be brought about, I'd have hustled him off to the nearest asylum for crazy people, countin' that he had gone clean off his head, an' yet here we are readin' every mornin' ship news that has been sent by wireless. Well, well, this earth is moving terribly fast, no mistake."

"Where is that schooner lying, Captain Tobi? I looked for her when we came in, but didn't see any craft that might answer the description."

"That's what I call the queer part of it. Instead of haulin' in here where everythin' is handy, they must needs sneak 'round the point, an' are layin' up at Dean's fish wharf, just as if they wanted to keep out of sight. When you come to think of it, that's the very way for 'em to make people inquisitive. Why does a vessel that's takin' on a new topmast go to the fish wharf, instead of layin' up here near the yard where the work has got to be done? If so be I may, I'd like to ask why your father is so keen about the craft? Has she been foolin' 'round Barren island rufflin' the foxes?"

"She put in there the night of the storm, and then went to sea again," Paul replied hesitatingly, not

knowing whether he might be warranted in satisfying the old sailor's curiosity.

"At all events, I reckon your father got suspicious of 'em, else he wouldn't be callin' on me."

"I think perhaps he wanted to make certain whether she was an honest craft or not. You will tell Ned Bartlett, captain, when you have learned anything?"

"Aye, aye, my hearty, that I will, and you can count on hearin' from me to-morrow night at the latest. Meanwhile, tell your father that I will send him word when the schooner puts to sea."

Then the two parted, Captain Tobi to spy upon the schooner which had so lately visited Barren island, and Paul to find his particular friend and fellow-operator, Ned Bartlett.

This last task was not a long one. It was nearly time for the noonday meal, and by going directly to Ned's home Paul's search was ended.

There is little need to say that it was necessary that the visitor from Barren island should give a detailed account of all that had occurred on that desolate piece of land before Ned was willing to speak of other matters, and after the story had been told in all its details with injunctions of perfect secrecy, the two lads made further arrangements as to the time when the stations should be opened, Ned agreeing that he would be at his post at least ten minutes three times each day—namely, at seven o'clock in the morning, twelve at noon, and six at night.

In order, however, that Captain Thompson might have ample opportunity to send such information as he

succeeded in gaining regarding the schooner, the Seaview operator promised to be in his station during every hour of the succeeding day, save when he was obliged to go to the academy.

"I'll take my books down there, so I shan't be wasting time, for you know I'm doing my level best to get ahead of the class once more in order that I may pay you a visit. It seems to me Barren island has suddenly become about the liveliest place on this coast, and if hard work can bring it about, I am going to have some part of a finger in the pie."

Then, while Ned ate his dinner, Paul hurried home to see his mother, with the agreement that Ned was to call for him on his way to the machine shop, where Zenas was doubtless awaiting them.

The lad from Barren island did not make his mother acquainted with all that had happened there, fearing lest she would be unduly anxious if she knew that men were hiding in the farm-house evidently for the purpose of doing mischief. He explained why his father intended to remain longer, by giving as a reason that the male members of the Downs family were not attending to their duties as had been agreed upon.

It seemed to Paul as if he had but just arrived home when Ned came for him, and then it was his duty to go because of his father's injunctions to return before nightfall if possible.

Zenas had done his share of the work thoroughly, as was learned a few moments later, and before the academy bell rang to summon the pupils to the afternoon session Ned was standing on the pier bidding

his friend adieu as the old dory, gathering speed each instant, left the dock on her return to Barren island.

"Remember to-morrow!" Paul shouted warningly, and Ned replied:

"Don't fear that I will forget, and if it's possible for you or Zenas to come over here next week, I'll be ready to go back with you for a few days."

"We'll come whenever you say the word. The Hampton boat can make the voyage in a little more than half the time this craft does, so it won't be much of an undertaking."

Then the occupants of the dory were beyond hailing distance, and, looking astern, Paul saw Ned wave his hat vigorously, after which he hurried away in the direction of the academy.

"I'll allow you've been talkin' this 'ere wireless business so long an' so fast that there's no danger of my gettin' another dose of it, eh?" Zenas said with a grin when they were well away from the land, and Paul replied with a laugh:

"I declare I forgot what you wanted me to do. Ned and I haven't even spoken on the subject, save to make arrangements as to when he should be in the station; but don't worry, Zenas. I won't insist upon your knowing more about coherers, detectors, and spark gaps until you are eager for the information; but if you will once set about making yourself familiar with the apparatus, I'll answer for it that you'd soon tire me out with asking questions."

"Perhaps I may come to that; but it don't seem likely. What with the foxes an' them as are tryin' to

come at 'em, I reckon my time will be 'bout taken up. I allow you count on puttin' the Hampton boat in shape, seein's we shall get there so early in the afternoon."

"I can do that in half an hour, if I made the measurements for the fittings correctly. We will run alongside of her when we come into the cove. You can leave me aboard, and go on shore to report to father."

"It'll be a pretty slim kind of a report, seein's all I can say is, 'Here are the oilskins, Mr. Simpson,' an' he'll say, 'How much did you pay for 'em?' an' I'll tell him I had 'em charged on his account."

"That'll be enough until we are in the shanty again. I'm wondering if father will have anything startling to tell us."

"I don't allow he's had time to find out very much. Them as are hidin' over Daniel Downs's kitchen will stay under cover pretty snug to-day, at all events; but when night comes, then our work is cut out, for we're bound to keep that 'ere house mighty close under our eyes without being seen by any of the Downs family."

The old dory broke her record during this trip from Seaview to Barren island, and the afternoon was but little more than half spent when Zenas ran her alongside the Hampton boat; waited until Paul could scramble out, taking his fittings with him, and then on to the shore, agreeing to return half an hour later.

Before beginning his work of putting the big craft into commission once more, Paul gazed curiously around; but without seeing any signs of life save the

broad back of Zenas, as, having beached the old dory, he went up toward the station.

Every one else on the island remained hidden from view as if having some good reason for concealment, and straightway the lad fell to imagining what might have happened during his absence, conjuring up the most improbable events with no other effect than to make himself decidedly uncomfortable in mind.

Then he began to work with feverish haste, having almost persuaded himself that his father was in dire need of him ashore, and when, after what seemed like a very long time, Zenas came out in Mr. Downs's dory to take him across to the beach, the lad's work was finished.

"Are you all right?" Zenas cried when he was within easy hailing distance, and Paul replied nervously:

"I've done my work here, and so far as can be seen this craft is in as good condition as before Mr. Downs's friends tried their hand at disabling her. What's the news ashore?"

"Nothin', so far as I can make out. Your father wasn't at the station, so I went 'round to the farmhouse. Mrs. Downs said he wasn't feelin' well, an' had gone upstairs to lay down."

"Sick, is he?" Paul cried apprehensively, and Zenas grinned as he pulled the dory alongside the larger craft, saying in a low tone:

"I reckon he ain't ailin' to hurt. Most likely thinks he can keep his eye out on the Downs family easier

while stayin' upstairs, than if he loafed 'round the outside."

"What are we to do about it?" Paul asked helplessly.

"I reckon it's a clean case of obeyin' orders, an' nothin' more. He said we should wait for him at the station, an' that's easy done. Ready to go ashore?"

Paul replied by leaping into the dory, and as the boat's bow was headed for the beach he said half to himself:

"I don't like the idea of father's staying in that house."

"Why not?"

"Because there's no knowing what might happen if those men discovered that he was watching them. People who would go so far as they have to work mischief, might be willing to commit a yet greater crime,"

"Now don't get any such idees in your head, lad, else you'll be all worked up, an' no good done. It strikes me you're pilin' up the agony from nothin' but your imagination. It isn't anythin' very far out of the ordinary to steal fox pelts, an' not so serious when taken into a court of law; but more than that would likely land Mr. Downs's boarders in the State Prison."

"Father seems to think that what has already been attempted is a very serious matter."

"Aye, so it is when you look at it from the fox end. He's figurin' to save the money that's been invested, an' wants to do the job up so brown that these fellers won't try the dodge agin. They think nobody except the Downs family knows they're on the island, an' that

it will be easy to shut our eyes. But betwixt the three of us I'll allow that they're goin' to get considerable of a jolt before this business is ended."

While this conversation was being carried on Paul and Zenas were walking in a direct line from the beach to the shanty, which course would take them some distance from Mr. Downs's home, and when they had arrived nearly opposite the dwelling, both were somewhat surprised to see the farmer come out, waving his hand energetically for them to stop.

"What's the matter?" Paul asked solicitously, fearing on the instant that something of harm might have come to his father.

"I was wantin' to ask why you wasn't more sociable-like? It seems as if you counted on keepin' away from us, when you sneak up from the shore in this way, after havin' been over to Seaview for a visit."

"We were going to the station, and there's no real reason why we should go to the house at this time of the day," Paul said with just a shade of hesitation in his voice, for he hardly knew how to reply to this seeming reproach.

"Got business over there, eh?" Mr. Downs asked inquisitively.

"Nothing more than that we ought to be on hand in case any one wants to send us a message."

"Who might you be countin' on would send word to you now your father's here?" and Paul had good reason, from the expression on the old man's face, to believe that there was more than simple curiosity in the question. It seemed very much as if Mr. Downs

was afraid information which would not be pleasing to himself might be sent from the mainland.

"Ned Bartlett always calls me up toward night, and I like to be there to answer."

"What does he have to talk about so much? It must be you have jest seen him, eh?"

"Yes, he was at the pier when we left."

"An' you are expectin' he'll send some word over to-night?"

"I wasn't expecting it; but counted on being there in case he wanted to talk with me," Paul said, now speaking curtly, for the farmer's tone was not pleasing. "Even if I wasn't needed at the instrument, it would be better for Zenas and I to spend our time in the shanty than sitting around your kitchen, where we might inconvenience Mrs. Downs."

"I s'pose you don't know about your father, eh?" Mr. Downs asked abruptly after a brief pause.

"Know about him? What do you mean?"

"Didn't mother tell this feller here that he was sick in bed?"

"She said he wasn't feelin' very well, an' had gone upstairs to lay down, that's all," Zenas added.

"Wa'al, I reckon that's about the sum an' substance of what she did say; but the fact is, sonny, your father's a sick man, an' seems to me like as if you ought'er telegraph for your mother to send after him. This 'ere island ain't any place for a man that's ailin', an' the sooner he's taken off of it the better."

"I reckon he won't go till he gets good an' ready," Zenas said with his purring laugh. "When Benjamin

K. Simpson gets so that he's got to be taken off the island, he'll be a pretty sick man, an' I'll answer for it that he couldn't walk upstairs alone."

"Wa'al, perhaps it's none of my business anyway; but it kind'er struck me as though you ought'er tell your ma just how he is, so she can advise him to go home. Of course mother an' I'll do all we can to make him comfortable; but we ain't got the kind of a place that he's been in the habit of livin' in."

"Did you think he looked very sick when you saw him last?" Paul asked, now beginning to understand the meaning of the farmer's sudden solicitation regarding his employer's health.

"He wasn't right peart, that's a fact. Said he guessed he'd better go upstairs an' take to the bed a spell. 'Twixt you an' me, when a man like him admits as much as that, things have got pretty serious, so you'll tell your ma about it, will you?"

"I'll wait until father gives his permission."

"Take my advice, an' do it now, without sayin' a word to him, 'cause when a man of his age gets to feelin' poorly, it ain't long before he runs down hill fast."

"Paul will fix it all right 'twixt now an' night, Mr. Downs," Zenas said, and then, without seemingly giving heed to his movements, he linked his arm in the lad's, forcing him to a rapid pace.

"Think over what I've said, an' don't wait to talk with him," Mr. Downs called after them, and, looking back an instant later, the two saw that he was slowly retracing his steps to the house.

"The old rat!" Zenas exclaimed when they were at such a distance that there was no danger his words could be overheard. "Wants to get rid of your father, eh? An' counts on makin' you do the job? If Daniel Downs is never any sicker than Benjamin K. Simpson is this minute, he'll live until Gabriel's last trump is sounded. Mind what I'm tellin' you, lad: Them boarders of his have got tired of hidin' in that hot attic over the kitchen, an' if Downs can't bring about any change in the situation, they'll make a break 'twixt now an' to-morrow mornin'. We've got our night's work cut out for us all right, an' I'm thinkin' it wouldn't be at all foolish if we bottled up a little sleep now while your father's on guard."

"You can take a nap if you feel like it; but I can't close my eyes while affairs are in this condition," Paul replied as he slackened his pace; but quickened it again very suddenly when he saw Sam Downs apparently coming from the head of Swallow-Tailed cove toward the station.

"What's the fellow doing?" Zenas asked sharply.

"I'm not too certain that he wouldn't do a mischief to the apparatus if he could."

Zenas was walking so swiftly as to make it seem that he was running, when he came face to face with Sam a dozen feet or more from the door of the shanty.

"Hello!" Farmer Downs's son cried in a friendly tone, but looking, so Paul thought, as if he had been caught on the verge of mischief. "What's your hurry?"

"I wanted to get into the station so's to take a nap,"

Zenas stammered. "Didn't sleep very well last night."

"It seems like all hands of you are wantin' to lay down to-day. There's Mr. Simpson, he's up in the spare room; been there about all the time you were gone, an' now you're in sich a pucker that you've got to run in order to get inter bed."

Zenas was forced to wait until Paul came to open the door, and Sam followed them into the building without waiting for an invitation.

One glance around the small room told the wireless operator that nothing had been disturbed during his absence, and with a feeling of greater relief in his mind than he would have cared to admit, Paul asked of Sam:

"Where have you been?"

"Just movin' 'round, back and forth, 'cordin' to orders. It seems like we've got to keep humpin' ourselves all the time on account of them foxes, whether there's any stranger in sight or not."

"I thought your father did the watchin' in the daytime, so's you an' your brother could get a chance to sleep," Zenas suggested slowly.

"So he does; but I thought I'd have a look 'round seein's how I've got through with the bed for this day. What's the news over to Seaview?"

"Nothing much, except that a schooner put in there during the night of the gale with her topmast gone—carried away outside; near-about here 'cordin' to what I heard."

"So she— What's her name?"

"I don't know; she's layin' at Dean's wharf, like as if she didn't want anybody to see her. We had other fish to fry, an' wasn't very keen 'bout lookin' at her."

Sam appeared more disturbed by this information than an honest lad would naturally be. The carrying away of a topmast was not of such rare occurrence as to excite alarm, or even surprise, and yet the boy gave good evidence of both.

"Did you tell father what you heard 'bout the schooner?" he asked with an anxious note in his tone, and Zenas replied carelessly:

"We didn't allow it would have any great weight on his mind. 'Pears to me you're takin' it pretty hard, seein's she's a stranger that most likely you never saw nor heard of."

"What? Me?" and Sam's face flushed. "I ain't takin' it to heart, am I? It wouldn't make any difference to me if forty schooners lost their spars in the gale, 'cept they come 'round here, would it?"

"Well, I shouldn't suppose it would, only you're lookin' frightened, as if some of your best friends might have been on board."

"Who? Me? I ain't frightened. I've got nothing to do with any schooner. How long is she likely to stay there before gettin' fixed up agin?"

"I couldn't tell you, my son, for I didn't charge my mind with anythin' of the kind, though it seems to me like it would be quite a spell. If she'd hauled up near the shipyard now, it wouldn't have been any lengthy job. But while she's way over to Dean's wharf there

must be considerable time wasted. Like as not the schooner won't get out of Seaview for a week yet."

Sam turned toward the door, and Zenas, enjoying his alarm and embarrassment, said in a most friendly tone as he laid his hand on the boy's shoulder to detain him:

"What's your rush? Why don't you stop here for a spell, seein's how your father's on duty, an' you can't be needed."

"I've got to get back to the house," and Sam wrenched himself free from Zenas's detaining grasp. "There's somethin' I forgot to do, an' marm will just about have the fidgets if I haven't finished it before dark. I'll get back for a talk some other time."

Then the boy went swiftly toward the farm buildings, and Zenas said as he purred with delight:

"I reckon I've put a flea in his ear, an' he'll stick another one in the old man's head. If they believe the schooner can't get back here within a week's time, you mark my words that there'll be some change in their plans. It wouldn't be any small joke to keep those boarders of Downs's fryin' in that attic a week or so, would it?"

CHAPTER X

PATROLLING THE COAST

ZENAS was still laughing over the situation of the visitors in the attic of the farm-house, as he had pictured it in case strict watch should be kept upon the building, when Ernest entered without ceremony, and as Paul looked up inquiringly, he said:

"Your father wants to see you right away. I reckon he's taken pretty bad, an' all our folks think he ought'er be carried home 'bout as soon as it can be done."

Now Paul was really alarmed. He could not believe his father would have sent such a message unless it was a physical impossibility for him to leave the house, and, without waiting to ask any questions, he hurried away, crying to Zenas as he ran:

"You'd best stay right where you are so that I shan't have any trouble to find you in case father is needing more help than I can give him."

"I'll stay an' keep my eye on young Downs, so's to make certain he don't do any mischief," Zenas cried laughingly, and without the slightest intent to intimate that the lad might need watching; but Ernest looked decidedly troubled, as if he knew there were good reasons why he should not be trusted implicitly. His face flushed, and he shuffled his feet about as he asked stammeringly:

"What makes you think there's any need of keepin' watch over me?"

"It's a rule of mine, sonny, to allow that every fellow will bear watchin', an' I can't see why I should leave you out of the list."

"I haven't done anythin' that Mr. Simpson wouldn't like," Ernest cried, and on the instant Zenas looked at him questioningly, saying after a pause:

"I allow that you haven't been accused, an' that's why it sounds funny to hear you standin' up for yourself so strong. If you hadn't done anythin' crooked, you wouldn't be so keen to pick up a word spoken in a joke, same's when I answered Paul."

Ernest's face flushed even more deeply than before, and he moved about the small apartment uneasily as he replied accusingly:

"You fellows are keepin' everythin' so secret, an' hug to yourselves so snug up here, that it looks as if somethin' was wrong. I ain't the only one what's got the same idee in his head."

"Meanin' that your father is kind'er uneasy, eh?"

"Wa'al, he can't make out what you folks are drivin' at, an' that's a fact."

"Why should he care?" Zenas asked with an air of innocence. "So long as he lives up to the bargain he made with Mr. Simpson, I can't see why he should bother his head over what we're doin'. This 'ere is what you might call a telegraph station, an' it stands to reason we'd be 'round it a good deal so's to know if anybody wanted to send a message."

"Who'd send any word while you're here? Is anythin' goin' on over to Seaview that you'd need hear about?"

"Why bless your heart, of course there is. Paul might like to hear what his mother had for dinner, or how Ned was comin' on at the academy. You see we're bound to keep abreast of the news, even though we are on the most desolate place that can be found in the Atlantic ocean."

"Is that all you folks telegraph about?" Ernest asked curiously.

"Of course I can't say right up an' down what kind of news does come across here, for it's only a lot of dots and dashes when Paul picks 'em out. He can read it, though, an' there's no way for me to know whether he tells me about the whole of it."

Ernest looked puzzled, and it appeared to Zenas as if he was on the point of asking more questions; but at that moment Paul could be seen coming toward the shanty hurriedly, and the lad shuffled out of the building to ask:

"How's your father?"

"I don't believe he's very sick; most likely he'll come over here after supper."

"Then he ain't goin' home right away?"

"I don't know of any good reason why he should. It is for him to say how long he'll stay."

"Yes, of course it is; but my folks think he's real sick, an' ought'er be taken off the island as soon as it can be done."

"So your father told me; but I'm of the belief that there won't be any move made in that direction for some time to come," Paul replied with a note of sharpness in his voice, and then he hurried into the shanty,

where, through the open door, he watched keenly until Ernest had lazily moved beyond earshot.

"Was anything wrong?" Zenas asked in a low tone, for he understood that Paul had that to say which should not be overheard by any member of the Downs family.

"Father wants to get out of doors, for he's tired of being cooped up in that room; but he won't come until you are where it will be possible to keep a sharp eye on the buildings, at the same time that you can remain hidden from view."

"I reckon that can be done, providin' old Daniel don't keep too keen a lookout when I go snoopin' 'round. There's quite a pile of wood stacked up behind the shed, an' I might get out of sight there, unless some of the family came nosin' that way."

"Father says that you are to do the best you can, and I am to loiter around between the buildings and the cove. He has heard the men stirring about as if growing impatient because of being imprisoned there, and believes an attempt will be made this night to get them outside."

"That's my idee to a dot," Zenas added emphatically. "Now old Daniel knows that the schooner ain't likely to be here for some time, he's keen to get 'em where they won't come so near roastin'."

"We are to make no move until the horn blows, when you and I are to go to the farm-house for supper. After it has been eaten we're to take our stations, and he'll come downstairs."

"Then what?"

"He didn't explain further. It seems, however, that we're to have our eyes peeled till morning, and in case the visitors succeed in giving us the slip, I'm to keep the Hampton boat running around the island to prevent them from leaving. He believes that by giving these fellows, whoever they may be, a stiff dose, it will prevent others from attempting to do the foxes a mischief."

"An' he's right. I'm hopin' that John Ed Bingham is one of them as are being fried in Mrs. Downs's attic, in which case he'll be brought up with a round turn such as he's never felt before. Somehow that old scoundrel has got off by the skin of his teeth every time he's been in mischief, an' quite a lesson is needed before he'll decide to behave himself. What about this 'ere while you're doin' guard duty?" and Zenas motioned with his thumb toward the instruments which made up the wireless apparatus.

"As a matter of course it won't be possible to send or receive messages, and it isn't likely that we'll be called upon to do anything of the kind until Captain Thompson has learned something regarding the schooner."

Then Zenas decided that it would be a good idea for him to select a hiding-place in advance of the time when it would be necessary to occupy it, and Paul was left alone to wait until the horn should be blown summoning the family to supper.

He spent his time in guarding against a possible mischief to any of the apparatus, so far as was within his power, and so arranged things, as he believed, that it would be extremely difficult for any one

not understanding the mechanism to put the station out of commission.

He had but just ceased his precautionary labors when Zenas returned, and said as he filled and lighted his pipe:

"I reckon I've got a hidin' place all right. To the s'uthard of the woodshed, an' not more'n twenty feet from it, are the timbers of a buildin' that most likely fell down because of old age. I can crawl under them, if nobody is watchin', an' never a soul will know I'm near the house, unless the ruins are overhauled."

"You can eat your supper in a hurry, and go out of doors while all hands are at the table. That will settle matters, so far as your being seen while getting into the hiding place is concerned."

"You're right, an' the minute that horn begins to toot I'll make a bee line for the house," and Zenas indulged in a purring laugh which came near being his undoing, for he swallowed a quantity of tobacco smoke, and had but just recovered from a severe fit of coughing when the signal that the evening meal was ready could be heard.

Everything happened as Paul and Zenas had arranged. The members of the Downs family had hardly more than well begun supper when young Cushing pushed his chair back from the table with the air of one who has satisfied his hunger, and despite Mrs. Downs's entreaties that he "eat a little more," ran out of the room, shutting the door behind him with a bang that warned Mr. Simpson it was time for him to abandon his unpleasant post of duty.

Paul had left the building before his father appeared, and five minutes later was lying on the grass between the house and the cove, where he must of necessity see any one who came out of or went into the farmer's dwelling.

Half an hour later Mr. Simpson joined his son, sitting by the latter's side as he said in a low tone:

"Perhaps it would be as well for you to go into the station a few moments, in case Captain Tobi has any message to send. I'll wait here till you come back. Make an arrangement to have Ned at his instrument early in the morning."

"He has already agreed to be there at seven o'clock, sir."

"Very well; that will be early enough. Now find out if he wants to say anything to you, and then come back here to me."

Paul hurried away; but owing to the care with which he had disconnected the apparatus that no harm might come to it from evil-disposed persons, it was a full half hour before he could send out the call of n-d, and in the meanwhile Sam Downs had come into the shanty, looking curiously around, as if fancying some changes might have been made since he was there last.

"What's goin' on now?" he asked, coming close to Paul's side as if fascinated by his rapid working of the telegraph key.

"Nothing out of the ordinary run that I know of," Paul replied as he continued the call, stopping now and then to switch on the receiver and listen.

"Seems like as if you was in a terrible hurry to rout out somebody, don't it?"

"I am trying to call Ned Bartlett, that's all; but there's no hurry about it. One is forced to work this key quickly in order to form the letters correctly."

Before Sam could ask any further questions the reply came:

"O. K. n-d. Why weren't you there at six?"

"Other business," Paul replied, Sam watching his every movement jealously. "Have you heard anything?"

"No. Schooner still at fish wharf. Captain Tobi is at Mansfield's with a man who may be the captain. Shall you call me up again to-night?"

"Can't, because of other work."

"Anything lively going on?"

"Zenas thinks something will drop before morning. Good-night."

"Good-night. Don't get into more trouble than you can get out of," and the telegraphic conversation was at an end until next morning.

"What has he been sayin', if he did really talk through that contraption?" Sam asked curiously, and Paul replied with a laugh, as once more he made the station snug for the night beyond all ordinary possibility that harm could be done the apparatus:

"He says he will talk with me in the morning."

"Seems to me it took a good while for him to say that little," Sam replied, as if he believed it was Paul's purpose to deceive him in some way.

"Well, he did say a bit more; but it was nothing

that would be of interest to you. If you don't believe messages can be sent without wires, why are you so curious to know what I pretend was said?"

"Wa'al, you see, we ain't jest certain but that it all works as you say, an' it stands to reason a fellow would like to know what might be goin' on."

"All that concerns us is to prevent any one from doing a mischief to the foxes," Paul said as he opened the door, intending that Sam should construe the movement as an invitation for him to take his departure.

"I reckon they're all right," the lad replied without giving any heed to the mute invitation. "The trouble is that you an' your father are too finnicky 'bout the creeters. They'll take care of themselves, an' be a good deal better off if you'll leave 'em alone. We've promised that nobody shall land here, an' will keep our word."

"Of course you will, else it would be necessary for father to put others in your place. Now if you will go out, I can lock the shanty."

"What's the need of doin' that?" Sam asked suspiciously. "When there's nobody but us folks on the island, I don't see why you should be so fussy."

"It doesn't do any harm," Paul replied with a laugh, "and in case any person did happen to get ashore despite your watchfulness, he couldn't do mischief here."

Sam looked inquiringly at the lad from Seaview, as if trying to decide whether there might be any hidden meaning in his words, and meanwhile Paul gently, but with a certain determination, forced him toward the door until he was on the outside.

"HERE HE IS! COME AND HELP ME!"

"Now where are you goin'?" Master Downs asked, in no way disconcerted by thus being forcibly ejected.

"I count on loafing around a spell in the open air. It's too good a night to stay indoors. Isn't it time for you to begin your rounds of the shore? I thought you and Ernest went on duty at sunset."

"That's in the bargain, but if all hands of you are snoopin' 'round, there's no need of our joinin' the procession," Sam replied, and then added suddenly, "Where's the other fellow?"

"At the cove, I fancy. Since some one disabled the Hampton boat, even when you and Ernest were supposed to be standing careful watch, it is up to us to see that such a thing doesn't happen again," and Paul set out in the direction of the farm-house as if he would part company with Master Downs; but Sam was not to be shaken off so easily."

"Of course nobody had anythin' to do with the boat but you," he replied doggedly. "None of our folks would have hurt her, an' you must have got flustered an' lost the nuts an' sparker, so father says."

"He forgets that I showed him good proof some person had landed that morning," Paul added, and then he was come to where his father, in the attitude of one who is simply idling away the time, remained on watch.

Not until then did Sam take himself away, and when he was beyond earshot on a course which would lead him to the cove, most likely in search of Zenas, Paul asked in a whisper:

"Have you seen anything suspicious?"

"I might say yes or no with equal truth," Mr. Simpson replied. "Five minutes ago I fancied some person came out of the kitchen door by the side of Mrs. Downs; but I must have been mistaken, for when she went into the woodshed no one was to be seen. A moment later I thought I heard what sounded like a cry of distress; but it couldn't have been, for there is no one near here to do mischief, and, besides, otherwise everything has been as still as the grave. Did Ned have any news for us?"

Paul repeated all that his friend had said, and then told his father of Sam's visit, adding in conclusion:

"Mr. Downs and his sons must think you are communicating with the mainland in a way that will work to their harm, otherwise they wouldn't be so curious regarding what comes or goes over the wireless."

"Knowing they are engaged in an act of treachery against me, it is only natural they should be unduly suspicious. You are to stay nearabout here, where you can keep the buildings in full view, and I will move around a bit. I haven't seen Mr. Downs since supper, and would really like to know if he is yet in the house."

Paul was not in the mood to walk more than might be absolutely necessary, and after his father left him he lay stretched out at full length on the grass, with his face turned toward the house, enjoying a short respite from the excitement under which he had labored since morning.

Within his range of vision no human being could be seen. The surf was singing a sleepy song, as if wearied from its exertions during the gale; now and

then one of the steers lowed as if because of being disturbed, and a night bird swooped around the prostrate lad with a soft note of gladness. All else was silence.

Lazily Paul wondered where Ernest was and where Sam had gone. He felt certain he knew exactly the location of Zenas's hiding place, and did not spend overly much time gazing in that direction.

Mr. Simpson had strolled, as if aimlessly, toward the house, evidently intending to circle around the northerly portion, and when he disappeared from view behind the building Paul watched with no especial eagerness for his reappearance at the southerly end.

It was while he lay there speculating as to what his father might be doing in the rear of the dwelling, that he was startled into a sitting posture by what sounded like a moan of distress, and he listened intently, his heart beating wildly, until satisfying himself that he must have been mistaken, when he stretched out at full length once more.

Night was coming on rapidly. The gaudy colors sent by the setting sun had faded from the clouds; the grayness of twilight was giving place to darkness when again he was aroused, and this time he sprang to his feet almost believing some accident had happened to his father, who as yet had not come from behind the dwelling.

"That was surely a human voice!" he exclaimed, unconsciously speaking aloud. "My orders were to remain here; but if I hear that sound again I'll take the chances of disobeying father to learn what it means."

At that moment Mr. Downs appeared, coming from

the direction of the thicket where the foxes had been liberated, and despite the gloom of night, Paul fancied that he could see the farmer looking about him furtively, as if fearing some one might have been dogging his footsteps.

As he approached the house the man halted now and then to gaze around, and Paul crouched low on the earth lest the outlines of his form should be seen against the sky.

After loitering around irresolutely five minutes or more, Mr. Downs went into the dwelling, and a few seconds later, to his great relief of mind, Paul saw his father come from behind the house.

Mr. Simpson showed himself boldly, as if not afraid of being seen, and hurriedly approached his son.

"What have you seen?" he demanded sharply.

"Nothing, except Mr. Downs as he came from the woods—at least, it seemed to me he came from there."

"The men have got out of the house despite our watching."

"How do you know that, sir?"

"The window of the attic is open, and when I came here from supper it was closed. Downs also got out of the house without being seen by us, and, as you say, he has just come from the thicket, although it was in the bargain that neither he nor his sons should go among the trees until I gave permission. Have you heard anything?"

"Twice a sound like a person moaning, and I had made up my mind that I'd go to find out what it might be if it was heard again."

"Do you know where Zenas made his hiding place?"

"Under the timbers of the ruined building just back of the shed. If, as you believe, the men have left the house, there is no reason why he should remain there any longer."

"Call him in. I will wait here. You and he must patrol the shore in the Hampton boat from now till morning, for I don't intend those fellows shall leave the island save with my permission. We will anchor the old motor boat and Mr. Downs's dory out where they can't be come at save by swimming."

Paul stole softly away in obedience to his father's bidding, having no doubt but that he could come upon Zenas at the first trial; but on arriving at the ruins he spoke Cushing's name softly three or four times without receiving any reply.

Then came the thought that most likely Zenas, having seen the strangers leaving the farm-house, had followed to dog their footsteps, therefore he returned to acquaint his father with what he supposed to be a fact.

Mr. Simpson was on the shore of the cove launching the old motor boat, and when Paul told him of the conclusion he had arrived at, appeared decidedly alarmed.

"It is certain Zenas did not follow the men, otherwise I must have seen him when I went near the thicket. Go back to the ruins and overhaul the timbers, giving no heed as to whether or no you are seen by the Downs family."

Paul, alarmed by his father's show of anxiety, ran back at full speed, allowing his imagination to picture all kinds of dark deeds that might have been done, and

arriving at the ruins of the building he pulled away the timbers with feverish haste, calling the name of Zenas now and then.

While working Mr. Downs came from the house looking and acting as if alarmed, and cried out to Paul in tremulous tones:

"What's goin' on there, young man? What's the matter?"

"I heard some one moan, and the noise sounded as if it might have come from beneath these timbers," Paul replied as he continued his work even after the farmer had seized him by the arm, saying angrily:

"Go back where you belong—to your shanty, or inter the house. If anybody is groanin' 'round here it's my business to hunt for 'em. If there is a hurt man under these 'ere timbers he can't be any of your folks."

"But that's just who he can be. Zenas should be around here somewhere. He isn't with father."

"What's he meddlin' with my property for?" Mr. Downs screamed in a loud but shaky voice as he dragged Paul back a few paces, and the lad, now convinced that this seemingly innocent-minded old man was really in league with his father's enemies, wrenched himself free from the detaining grasp as he said angrily:

"Don't you touch me, Mr. Downs, or I'll call to father for help. Zenas is here somewhere, and I count on finding him whether you like it or not."

"You shan't meddle with my property," the old man repeated again and again, as if not fully aware of what he was saying, and at that instant, having been at-

tracted by the outcries, Mr. Simpson came up hurriedly as he shouted:

"What's going on, Paul? Leave that boy alone, Downs, or you'll have trouble with me!"

"I won't have him diggin' 'round my buildin's," the old man wailed childishly, and Mr. Simpson cried:

"You don't own a stick or a stone on this place. Do as you had begun, Paul, and if we don't find Zenas soon I will take the law into my own hands, which won't be pleasant for those who are playing me false."

"Nobody is tryin' to hurt you, Mr. Simpson," the old farmer muttered, and then he would have set off toward the cove; but that Paul's father stopped him by saying sternly:

"Come back here! Neither you nor your sons are to move a boat this night, even though one of them is your lawful property. Come here by my side, and you'll be wise to make certain your sons don't venture on the shore near by here."

Meanwhile Paul was pulling the timbers aside to the best of his ability, cutting his hands on rusty nails, and tearing the flesh of his fingers with jagged splinters of wood. There was a great fear in his heart that some grievous wrong had been done Zenas, and he gave no heed to his own injuries.

Then, while his father was actually holding the old farmer to prevent him from going toward the cove, Paul came upon that for which he sought, and a cry of distress escaped his lips.

"Here he is, dead I believe! Come and help me, father!"

Mr. Simpson forced Daniel Downs to go with him as he scrambled over the timbers until it was possible to see an apparently lifeless form half doubled under a heavy beam, and then, raising his voice to the full strength of his lungs, he shouted the names of Sam and Ernest.

"Aren't you going to help me get the poor fellow out?" Paul asked in sorrowful surprise.

"We will force those to aid us whom we have hired, for you must go down to the cove. I towed the old dory out to the Hampton boat; but the craft belonging to Mr. Downs is yet on the beach, and I am not minded any one shall leave this island in her, even though Zenas apparently stands in sore need of help, if indeed he is alive. It will be a dark night's work for you and yours, Daniel Downs, if real harm has come to the poor fellow. Go to the cove, Paul, and defend yourself with anything that may come handy, if you are attacked either by strangers or those whom you know. I will attend to Zenas."

Then, as Paul unwillingly obeyed this command, Mr. Simpson shouted again the names of the boys, and after a brief pause Paul could hear them reply from the direction of the thicket.

"Come here at once and help your father!" Mr. Simpson cried peremptorily, and before he had gained his station near Mr. Downs's dory, Paul could tell by the sound of voices that the boys were at the scene of what must have been foul play.

The lad believed a murder had been committed, and, quite naturally, he was terrified in the highest degree.

He looked about him for a weapon, feeling convinced that an attack would speedily be made upon him as on Zenas; but could find nothing that promised protection against those who had seemingly been so desperate.

"It must have been that the men came upon him while they were sneaking out of the house, and, to prevent him from giving an alarm, killed the poor fellow," he muttered to himself as he searched in vain for that which would serve his purpose. Then it flashed across his mind that the purpose in sending him to guard the cove was to make certain none of the boats could be used in the escape that would likely be attempted, and with a sigh of relief he shoved Mr. Downs's dory into the water, leaping into her as he pulled toward the Hampton boat.

"I can take care of all three while they are at anchor in deep water, because nobody may come near me save by swimming," he said, and this thought served to allay his terror somewhat.

Coming alongside the Hampton boat he scrambled into her, after making the dory fast, and then strained his eyes into the gloom, striving to make out what might be happening ashore.

After what seemed a very long while, during which he cast furtive glances around, almost expecting that those who had attacked Zenas would suddenly appear to demand that he send one of the boats ashore, Paul fancied it was possible to see four or five men carrying a burden in the direction of the wireless station, and all the old terror came back to him, for it was as if he had been forsaken.

As a matter of fact, he had dimly seen the forms of Sam and Ernest as they carried the apparently lifeless body of Zenas to the shanty in accordance with Mr. Simpson's orders, and were followed by Paul's father only, Daniel Downs having beat a retreat to his own home, muttering again and again as he went, that "this business was none of his."

"It will be credited to you until the guilty parties are run down," Mr. Simpson called after him, and Paul could hear the words distinctly. "If there appears any intention on the part of you or your sons to disobey my orders from this time on, I will summon the officers of the law from Seaview to take you into custody on the charge of murder!"

It was that word "murder" which caused Paul to cower in the cockpit of the Hampton boat, as with white and quivering lips he muttered:

"If this is the cost of silver fox farming, it is better that father gives over trying to raise them, for all the animals that ever went on four legs, no matter what price their pelts may bring, are not worth the life of Zenas Cushing."

CHAPTER XI

THE VICTIM

BELIEVING Zenas Cushing had been killed, knowing that the two men who had escaped from the Downs's house were somewhere on the island eager to reach the mainland, and willing, as had already been shown, to fight for their liberty, it is little wonder that Paul crouched in the cockpit of the Hampton boat trembling with fear while expecting, without quite understanding how it might be done, that those whom Daniel Downs had harbored would speedily make an attack upon him.

But greater than the fear as to his own safety, was the anxiety concerning his father. He was alone on the island, one against five, if so be the Downs family and their late guests united forces, and all these men had good reason to fear what might come to them if Mr. Simpson was free to work his will.

They had been bold enough, these enemies, to strike down Zenas Cushing when they found him spying upon them, and, therefore, so Paul asked himself, why would they not muster courage to put his father beyond all power of inflicting punishment upon them?

The lad strained his eyes into the gloom in the vain effort to make out what might be happening ashore; his ears were open for the lightest sound other than the moaning of the surf, the soft lip-lip-lipping of the water on the shore of the cove, and the murmur of the light breeze.

Nothing betokening movement on the land could be seen or heard. It was as if Barren island had suddenly become a little world by itself, so far away and so inaccessible that Paul could never hope to reach it again. Then, in another instant, it was as if the island lay all too near him; as if those two men who had, perhaps, murdered Zenas Cushing, might be able to step from the beach to the Hampton boat before he could raise a hand in his own defence.

Thus suffering the mental agony which comes to one who has been abandoned, and again the fear that might beset him who momentarily expects to be engaged in deadly encounter, Paul spent in suspense moment after moment—how many he could not have said.

It might have been half an hour from the time he saw that shadowy procession bearing Zenas Cushing toward the wireless station, or it may have been ten times as long, so far as he had any idea, when the lad became aware that some one was approaching the shore hurriedly, and as if having no care whether his approach was discovered.

In Paul's mind there was no thought other than that this was an enemy coming to take possession of the boats, intending to use whatsoever force might be necessary in order to gain his object, and in his nervous fear, perhaps having in mind that "to be forewarned is forearmed," he cried sharply:

"Who's there?"

"Don't be afraid, Paul. Come ashore in the Downs dory."

It was his father's voice, and with difficulty did the lad restrain himself from crying aloud because of his great joy and relief of mind.

In a twinkling he was rowing toward the shore, and never before had he known a boat to hang back under the impetus of the oars as did this one. To him she seemed hardly to move through the water when, as a matter of fact, the old craft was dashing onward swiftly, and as her bow struck the beach Paul leaped over the rail knee-deep into the water, so great was his eagerness to feel the touch of his father's hand—to be encircled by his protecting arms.

"It must have been a long, trying hour for you," Mr. Simpson said as he embraced his son eagerly, much as though the lad had passed through some dire peril.

"Has it only been an hour, father?"

"Not quite as long; but I can well fancy how slowly the moments passed."

"And Zenas is really——"

Paul could not force himself to utter that ominous word; but his father finished the sentence in a cheery tone:

"He is really alive, my boy, and not injured so severely as we had at first reason to believe. He evidently received a heavy blow on the head; but whether through the accident of falling upon the timbers, or of being crushed beneath them, or again, if one of those men whom we are striving to capture deliberately struck him down, cannot yet be told, for the poor fellow has not really recovered consciousness. I

am of the belief, however, that he is not permanently disabled."

"How did you dare to leave him?"

"The two Downs boys are in the shanty, and so thoroughly terrified as to be incapable of doing any mischief. In fact, I have forced them to remain with him, not intending they shall have speech with their father, or with those men who have been hiding in the dwelling, until I can be present to hear what is said. At this moment they are locked in the station, caring for Zenas."

"But they may do him a harm," Paul cried, all his terror reviving, and his father said soothingly:

"There is little fear of their trying to work further trouble. The attempt to steal the foxes, in which they undoubtedly had a share, has assumed such fearsome proportions as to terrify them. The question now is for us to so arrange matters that we may be very near each other, and yet guard the boats, which cannot be brought about while they remain here in this cove. Besides, you will be needed in the shanty when the time comes to communicate with Seaview."

"What can be done?" Paul asked helplessly when his father ceased speaking for an instant, and Mr. Simpson continued as if plans for the immediate future were fully mapped out in his mind. "It is nearly high water, and as I understand from what Mr. Downs has said, a craft even as large as the Hampton dory may be run into Swallow-Tailed cove without danger at such a time."

"But she cannot be got out again after the tide has

ebbed an hour," Paul interrupted. "Sam Downs told me he wouldn't dare attempt to pull a dory in there except on the height of the tide."

"So much the better for our purpose, and now the question is whether you can pilot her into the cove, towing the motor dory and Mr. Downs's craft?"

"I believe I can, sir; but how much better off are we then?"

"If Sam Downs is correct in his statement that even a small boat cannot be taken out of there except at high water, it will only be necessary for us to stand guard over the craft two hours in every twelve, which will be a decided improvement over matters as they are at present. The motor boats can be moored where they may be come at only by swimming, and you and I should be able to haul the Downs dory so far inland that she will remain in full view of whoever may be in the shanty. If you are willing to make the venture, and I would not propose it believing any danger might threaten in the work, it is time you set about it, for it must be nearly high water now."

"Shall you go back to the shanty, sir?" Paul asked in a tremulous tone as he began pushing the boat off into deeper water preparatory to scrambling aboard.

"I will make sure that the Downs boys have not recovered from their fears sufficiently to leave the station, and be at the head of Swallow-Tailed cove when you arrive."

By this time Paul was pulling away from the beach toward the Hampton dory, and Mr. Simpson remained on the shore only long enough to see that his son

was safely aboard the largest craft, after which Paul understood by the noise that he was retracing his steps.

Under ordinary circumstances Paul would have looked upon this task as a simple one, for he had, during the week when he and Ned were building the shanty, taken note of the entrance to Swallow-Tailed cove many a time until he remembered the location of every rock which guarded the entrance, and there would have been no doubt in his mind as to the possibility of running in with even a larger craft than the Hampton boat.

Now, however, with the idea in his mind that enemies, who would not hesitate to commit a murderous assault, were lurking on either shore of the cove, he trembled with anxiety and fear until it seemed almost impossible he could raise the anchor.

And when that had finally been done, and with reasonable alacrity, although to Paul it was as if he should never succeed in getting the heavy weight aboard, he fumbled at the crank like one who sets about such a task for the first time. He cast many a hurried glance toward the shore on either side, fearing to see those men who had escaped from their hiding place in the farm-house, come out to make an attack upon him, although how that might have been done he could not explain.

When, however, the Hampton boat was finally under way and he could feel beneath him the vigorous thrust of the screw as it forced the craft swiftly ahead, his courage revived once more because of the sense of

freedom which came with each stroke of the powerful motor.

The night was not dark; by the light of the stars he could see clearly the shore on either hand, and once out of the cove the journey around to the northern end of the island was a short one.

Standing well off from the land in order that he might make a wide turn, he headed the boat directly in toward that point where he could see his father's form outlined dimly in the gloom, and slowing down to half speed as he entered the dangerous channel, he came to anchor when he was as nearly as could be in the center of the small harbor.

The old dory was left moored alongside the Hampton boat, and in Mr. Downs's well-worn craft Paul pulled ashore, after which he and his father, by dint of severe exertions, succeeded in hauling her a full hundred feet beyond high-water mark in the direction of the station.

"It will be impossible for any two men to launch her without our hearing them," Mr. Simpson said, speaking for the first time since his son had come ashore. "We will go to the shanty now, and remember that it is my purpose to keep Sam and Ernest away from their father during the night. Therefore, in case you see either of them attempting to go toward the farm-house, you must give an alarm."

"Can Zenas tell anything about what happened, sir?"

"So far I have made no attempt at questioning him. He appears to be conscious, but does not speak. Medi-

cal attendance is necessary, and if you can communicate with Ned Bartlett, tell him to send a physician at once."

All this Mr. Simpson said while he and his son were walking toward the shanty, and then, taking a key from his pocket, he unlocked the door of the rude building, thus revealing the interior, where could be seen Zenas laying upon the bed with wide-open eyes staring at the roof, while crouching against the wall opposite the bunk were Sam and Ernest, silent and motionless, apparently so terrified as to be almost helpless.

Indeed there was good reason for their terror, if all that Mr. Simpson and Paul suspected were true. The boys, as well as their father, had had a hand in bringing to the island the two strangers, and in keeping them concealed. If Zenas had been stricken down by one of these fellows who was making his way from the house to gain the shelter of the woods, then would the entire Downs family be involved, so far as the officers of the law might look at it, in the assault. In case it proved fatal, the results must be very serious for all concerned.

Paul stepped directly to the side of the bunk, and, taking Zenas' hands in his, asked softly:

"Do you know me, old man?"

The only reply was a mild pressure of the fingers, and a movement of the eyes as they rested for an instant upon the lad.

"Has he spoken since I went out?" Mr. Simpson asked of the Downs boys, and Sam replied:

"He has stayed jest that way ever since we've been here."

The manager of Silver Fox Farm was at a loss to know what should be done for the sufferer. Zenas did not appear to be in any pain, and yet it seemed positive the injury was severe, otherwise he would have made an effort to explain how it had been inflicted. Nothing might be done, however, until medical aid arrived from the mainland, and many hours must elapse, even under the most favorable circumstances, before a physician could come.

"Can we go home?" Ernest asked when Paul had turned aside from the semi-conscious man to set the apparatus in readiness for use, that he might begin calling Ned at the earliest moment there was any possibility of his being in the Seaview station.

"You are to remain here until daylight," was Mr. Simpson's reply.

"What's the reason we can't go to bed?"

"Because I intend that the first interview with your father shall be in my presence."

At that moment the door was opened timidly, as if he who stood on the outside was uncertain what might be his reception, and looking around wonderingly, Paul saw Farmer Downs, pale, trembling, and evidently in as high a state of fear as were his sons.

"Well, what do you want?" Mr. Simpson asked in a tone of anger, and Daniel Downs replied in a quavering voice:

"I've come to see why the boys ain't at home, or standin' watch 'cordin' to the bargain we made."

"I have kept them here because of not being willing you and they should get alone together and concoct a story concerning this night's work."

"What story have we got to tell?" Mr. Downs asked whiningly. "We didn't see anythin' more'n you did. Zenas Cushing must have been foolin' 'round the timbers of the old buildin', and fell in among them, pullin' one down on his head, I reckon."

"That's the way you have decided to explain it, eh?" and Paul's father stood directly in front of Farmer Downs so that he might not signal to the boys with his eyes.

"That's all there is to be told. I was in the house, an' Sam an' Ernest out on watch when the thing must have been done."

"I admit you were inside; but what about those who remained concealed in your attic since day before yesterday?"

"Who do you mean?" and now Mr. Downs tried unsuccessfully to appear both surprised and innocent; but Paul took note that his face grew a shade more pale, if indeed that could be possible, and his lips trembled as do those of one who is afflicted with palsy.

"Now, Daniel Downs, don't attempt to play the innocent with me, for I know very much more than you think," Mr. Simpson began sternly, forcing the old farmer to look directly at him. "In the first place, Zenas, Paul and I saw the schooner come into the cove, and were on watch under your upturned dory when three men came ashore. Paul and I followed them, leaving Zenas on guard at the cove. The lad and I

stood in your woodshed immediately after the three entered the house, and a few moments later saw one of them come out and go toward the shore. Zenas was on the alert when this fellow pulled off to the schooner, after which she was gotten under way at once. The next morning she put into Seaview, having lost her topmast during the night, and there is where your plans for working me an injury have gone awry."

"I haven't had any plan to do you harm," Mr. Downs cried, and Mr. Simpson replied with yet more of sternness in his tones:

"It is useless to make denials, for I am thoroughly conversant with all that has happened. I can even give you an outline of the plan. It was your purpose, and the purpose of those who visited you, that they remain hiding in the attic over the kitchen until nightfall, when they were to make their way into the woods, and, during the following day, endeavor to get hold of the foxes. The schooner was to return that night, heaving to somewhere off the coast, if her captain did not dare to sail directly into the cove, and take off these men with their plunder. The loss of the topmast prevented the craft from returning according to agreement, and I kept the men in their hiding place by pretending to be sick. This afternoon I concluded it was time to let them show their hands, and we three were on watch, Zenas amid the ruins of the building a short distance from the woodshed. Paul and I failed to see the skulkers, but this poor fellow must have confronted them as they went out of the house screened

by your wife, who professed to be wanting fuel, and they struck him down as you have seen."

"How can you accuse me, Mr. Simpson, of havin' anythin' to do with such a thing as that, when I stayed right in the house from the time you went out till Zenas Cushing was found?"

"I am not charging that you had an active hand in it, Daniel Downs; but you were concerned in the entire plot, and remaining indoors during the time the assault was made doesn't relieve you of guilt in the matter. Unless you had consented to aid those who would steal the foxes, they could not have remained hidden in your house. If you had been an honest man, you would have reported to me immediately they came, telling what was on foot. Instead of which you did all within your power to keep them concealed, and your wife aided in their effort to leave the dwelling to take refuge in the thicket. It was a scurvy piece of business, Daniel Downs, and from many a point of view a decided mistake on your part, since if it had been possible for them to gather in the six foxes, they would have received a comparatively small amount of money for the pelts, because furs taken during the summer season are of little value, and all that could be gained by the transaction must have been divided among the crew of the schooner and yourself. In other words, you stood ready to sell me, who would have paid you and your sons good wages during three, four or five years, for the paltry share that would be yours if the venture was a success, and there were many chances that your confederates couldn't secure even a single animal."

Mr. Downs made no reply. He stood with downcast eyes the picture of guilt, as Paul believed, and while one might have counted twenty no sound save the heavy breathing of the poachers' victim could be heard.

Then the farmer asked humbly, and in a voice so tremulous that it was only with difficulty the words could be understood:

"What are you goin' to do with me?"

"That's a question which is troubling me not a little," Mr. Simpson replied. "In the first place, we must learn how severely Zenas is injured, and to that end a physician will be sent for as soon as the wireless station at Seaview is in working order. I have done what I might to prevent those friends of yours, who are in the woods, from leaving the island, and shall take yet more vigorous measures. At the present I am inclined to send word to the sheriff, asking him to come here with a posse of men to capture those who may soon be charged with murder. However, that question cannot be decided until we know how seriously Zenas is hurt."

"Surely you won't be hard on an old man who has tried to live up to the bargain he made——"

"Don't attempt to use any such arguments as that, Daniel Downs," Paul's father cried sharply. "From the very first you and your sons have neglected your duty, and were seemingly careless whether my instructions were carried out to the letter or not. Finally you joined with the villains who are in hiding, to wreck my venture in foxes."

"I didn't really know what I was doin', Mr. Simp-

son, indeed I didn't," Mr. Downs wailed, and Sam added in a sniveling tone:

"Father couldn't help takin' in John Ed Bingham when he came to the house that night, else he would have stood a chance of gettin' himself into terrible trouble."

"Then that notorious old smuggler is one of the two who are hiding in the thicket?" Mr. Simpson cried, and Farmer Downs nodded his head feebly.

A low moan from Zenas caused Mr. Simpson to step quickly to the side of the bunk, when the injured man asked in a fairly steady voice for water.

There was in the shanty only the small quantity remaining from what Paul had brought in the morning, and not willing to give the sick man water which had been drawn so long, Mr. Simpson said to Sam:

"Go to your home, and fill that pail from the well. Come back as quickly as possible, and see to it that you do not hold converse with any person."

Sam hurried out of the building as if overjoyed at the opportunity of escape, even for a few moments, from his angry employer, and Paul leaned over the smuggler's victim to ask:

"Can't you speak a word, Zenas?"

To the lad's great surprise the injured man whispered softly:

"Not while those Downs scoundrels are 'round to hear," and having said this he continued to stare vacantly at the roof above him.

Rejoicing at this evidence that he whom they had believed to be so dangerously wounded was shamming

to a certain extent, Paul beckoned for his father to follow him out of the shanty, and having walked so far away that there was no possibility Ernest and Mr. Downs could overhear that which was said, the lad repeated what had been whispered.

"I have suspected it," Mr. Simpson said in a tone of relief. "Zenas has looked at me several times in a meaning way when the boys were where they could not see him. I had believed it necessary to keep the lads until morning, for there was no thought in my mind that Downs might come here. Now that we've had an interview with him, and he and his sons have the same as admitted all which we had good reason for suspecting, it will not profit us to have them in the station any longer. When Sam comes back with the water I'll send them home."

Sam returned to the shanty with his pail filled in a shorter time than Paul had believed one could walk to the farm-house, and by so doing proved beyond a peradventure that he was woefully frightened, if not repentant.

He had had time to realize how much his father, his brother and himself had risked on the chance of getting a few dollars in case John Ed Bingham was successful in capturing and killing the foxes, and if there was anything like sorrow in his heart because of what had been done, it was induced by the knowledge that the trade with the old smuggler was a very one-sided affair, where one party had everything to gain and the other everything to lose, even if the venture was carried out beyond their most sanguine expectations.

Paul and his father followed Sam into the shanty, and after a generous draft of water had been given to the pretending invalid, Mr. Simpson turned to face the farmer.

"Do you know where Bingham and his friend counted on hiding during this coming day?" he asked sternly, and Mr. Downs shook his head vehemently as he replied earnestly:

"Indeed I don't, sir, indeed I don't. It was only their idee to get out of the house, for it was bitterly hot in the attic over the kitchen; and then again they wanted to be at their work so's everything might be ready when the schooner came back. Nothin' was said about where they'd hide."

"They counted, however, upon your supplying them with food?"

"Yes, sir," Ernest replied promptly. "We were to take provisions up to the spring, where you told us to leave fish for the foxes."

"And did you carry any there to-night?"

"No more than would serve for supper."

Mr. Simpson stood as if in deep thought an instant, and then said, addressing himself to Mr. Downs:

"I am not making any promises; but there is a possibility that you may escape just punishment by obeying me faithfully from now on."

"We'll do anythin' you tell us, Mr. Simpson; anythin' on this blessed earth that you say shall be done."

"Then here are my orders, and if I find that you are departing from them even in the slightest particular I promise to turn you and your sons over to the officers

of the law, not only on the charge of conspiring to steal the foxes, but as aiding and abetting in an attempt to commit murder. You may go home; none of the family are to venture out of doors, save for the purpose of getting wood and water, without my permission. When Bingham and his friend come for food, as they unquestionably will by to-morrow noon if you fail to carry anything to the spring in the morning, you are to refuse it, and endeavor, if possible, to let me know of their whereabouts. Not so much as a crust of bread are they to be provided with, and hark you, Daniel Downs, I won't trust to your promises again, for you have shown me how worthless they may be; but I count on keeping watch, and if I know of your holding communication in any way with those fellows who are now in the woods, or of your providing them with the smallest morsel of food, charges will be preferred against you. Remember, we can summon the sheriff by wireless, and have him here within two hours. Therefore you will be acting the part of a wiser man than you have yet shown yourself to be, if you live up strictly to my instructions."

Then Mr. Downs and his two sons made noisy promises, as if thinking that by loud speaking they could the better convince the hearers of their intended honesty, and after each had solemnly sworn to obey to the letter all the commands that had been given, and to do whatsoever should be required of him in the future, Mr. Simpson, still speaking in an angry tone, said:

"Very well. You may go to your home, and there you will tell your wife what has been said in this

shanty. Make her understand exactly what will happen if I see any of you out of doors save for the purpose of getting wood or water. She is to provide the meals as usual, and——"

"We shall go on short allowance if some of us don't catch fish."

"I will provide you with provisions until such time as it pleases me to let you roam about the island at will. Now go, and remember."

Mr. Simpson watched from the door of the shanty until the forms of the farmer and his sons were lost to view in the gloom, and then, turning toward the pretended invalid, he said:

"Now then, Zenas, how badly are you hurt?"

In an instant the smuggler's victim was sitting upright, his legs hanging over the edge of the bunk, as he replied in a cheery tone:

"I can't say that I've come out of it in first-class shape, Mr. Simpson; but I am allowin' the worst is over. That scoundrelly John Ed did hit me a tidy clip on the head for a fact, an' I didn't get much of an idea of what might be goin' on till about the time when you began to bring me up here. Then I reckon the shakin' kind'er brought me around; but I allowed it was best to hold off as if I'd been knocked completely out until such time as you could settle matters. An' that's what I was trying' to make you understand when I got the chance to look your way without bein' seen, sir."

"Are you feeling fairly well now?"

"Well, my head is buzzin' like a top, an' there's a

misery in it that pulls out a groan now an' then; but it'll be all right by daylight, I reckon."

"Tell us how it happened."

"That won't be much of a story, 'cause it was all over so quickly I didn't get time to move around very lively. I hid among the timbers all right, 'cordin' as had been agreed upon, an' had a first-class chance for seein' if anybody came from the house. When the old woman slipped out to the shed, with John Ed an' another man crouchin' close by her side so's they couldn't be seen by you who was layin' on the grass 'twixt the cove an' the house, I had a full view of 'em. They came straight toward me, an' somehow I got it into my mind that that villain of a smuggler knew where I was. Up I jumps when they was less than six feet from me, an' I could see that it give 'em quite a jolt, 'cause they wasn't expecting to find any one among that 'ere lumber. What it was John Ed had in his hand I can't make out, an' I've been puzzlin' over it all the while I've been layin' here pretendin' to be used up. Quicker'n a flash he give me a clip with something that sent the stars shootin' out of my eyes, an' I must have gone down like a log. That's all I know about it, sir, until I came to my senses while them Downs boys was luggin' me here."

CHAPTER XII

A CONFESSION

If Zenas had been allowed to follow his own inclinations he would have gone out at once to do guard duty, for now that the Downs family were the same as imprisoned in their home, it was absolutely necessary even a stricter watch than before should be kept in order to prevent the men who were hiding in the thicket from escaping.

"I believe it will be better for you to continue to play the invalid a few hours longer," Mr. Simpson said when the proposition was made by Zenas. "While Daniel Downs and his sons believe you to be on the verge of death it will be easier to hold them in at least partial subjection. With the boats in the cove where we can keep them under our eyes, I fail to see how that old reprobate and his friend will be able to make their escape. Stay snugly here, Zenas, getting into the bunk in case you hear any of the Downs family approaching, although I do not fancy there is much chance they will venture out very soon, and keep the door open so that you may have a view of the cove. Paul and I will make the circuit of the island, returning here before it is time for him to communicate with Seaview."

"Have a care of yourself, Mr. Simpson," Zenas said warningly. "John Ed Bingham won't hesitate at doin' anythin' whatsoever, if it appears to him that he's

likely to be taken prisoner, an' of that we've already had good proof."

"Don't fear for us," Paul's father replied carelessly. "I am not anticipating any serious trouble with Bingham; but if it should so chance that we meet, you may be certain he won't have an opportunity to deal me such a blow as he did you."

Then, beckoning for his son to follow, Mr. Simpson went out into the night, directing his steps first toward the northerly point of the cove in front of the farmhouse, and, skirting the entire shore, continuing on to the southerly end of the island, although knowing it was well-nigh impossible even for a dory to effect a landing there.

"Don't you count on trying to see the foxes pretty soon, father?" Paul asked when they were come to the easterly side of the thicket without having seen any signs of the two men.

"It is enough for me that the animals are here. Foxes don't take kindly to water, you know, therefore there is no danger of their swimming away, and the less they are disturbed the better it will be for our scheme."

"John Ed Bingham will most likely stir them up a good deal," Paul suggested.

"I'm not afraid of what he may do immediately. Certain it is he won't have an opportunity of disturbing them this night, and his first thought in the morning will be to procure more food. When he finds that Mr. Downs refuses to supply him, or, in other words, that we have succeeded in frightening the old fellow

most thoroughly, John Ed Bingham will, unless he is more foolish than I have ever supposed him to be, hatch some scheme for getting away from the island. Therefore it is that I shall not be seriously alarmed regarding the animals during the next four and twenty hours."

"And then you count on capturing the men?"

"I shall put forth every effort to that end, because it is in the highest degree necessary, if we are to continue the work of raising foxes, that those who first attempted to do us an injury be made to suffer all the penalties of the law that can be inflicted."

"Do you believe that we three can make prisoners of those two men?" Paul asked doubtfully, and his father replied with a laugh:

"I am of the belief that we can once their hunger has become serious; therefore, nearly everything depends upon keeping Daniel Downs and his family strictly to our programme. If they should play false a second time, Bingham and his friend might succeed in outwitting us."

"And you have every reason to believe they will play you false, sir, because of their fear of John Ed Bingham."

"I am reckoning their fear of the law will outweigh that old smuggler's influence; yet at the same time I do not intend to give them the chance for treachery. As soon as day dawns the chief portion of our work will be to make certain the entire family remains within doors."

Then Mr. Simpson quickened his pace, as if in haste to arrive at the wireless station, and Paul followed at

his heels, doubting much whether his father would be able to carry out the proposed plan unless assistance was summoned from the mainland.

During the walk around the island no signs of the two men who were in hiding had been seen, nor was there anything on the shore which might aid them in escaping, save at Swallow-Tailed cove, where it surely seemed that whoever remained at the station could guard the boats securely.

Zenas was in the bunk, his eyes wide open and staring at the ceiling when Paul and his father entered, and immediately afterward he sprang to his feet with that purring laughter of his, as he said in a low tone:

"I wasn't quite sure but that the old man Downs might have taken it into his head to come over here, an' you should have seen me scramble to get into the proper position for a man whose life has been about half beaten out of him. Did you see or hear anythin'?"

"I didn't expect we would come across the worthy Mr. Bingham, but made the circuit of the island more for the purpose of assuring myself there were no means by which he could get away, save here at the cove," Mr. Simpson replied as he seated himself in Paul's chair with the air of one who is weary to the verge of exhaustion.

"And everythin' seems to be pretty nigh straight, does it, sir?"

"So far as can be told in the darkness. Our chief concern just now is to make certain that neither Mr. Downs nor any member of his family provides the two men with food."

"That same thing was runnin' through my mind while you were away," Zenas said thoughtfully and with an expression of anxiety on his face. "It strikes me if I am to stay cooped up in this 'ere shanty to-morrow in order to make out that I'm mighty nigh dead, there's nothin' to prevent my doin' some work to-night, so's you two can get a little sleep. I don't reckon you're allowin' it will be possible to keep awake more than four an' twenty hours on a stretch."

"We shall need to gain some rest soon; but it seems to me better that you be kept out of sight for a time, because of the hold we shall thereby have on Daniel Downs and his sons."

"I'll agree with you in that, sir," Zenas replied heartily; "but what's to hinder my playin' watchman while it's dark? I'll circle 'round the house, keepin' this 'ere cove in sight so long's the tide's high enough for 'em to get a boat out, an' they never'll be any the wiser as to who I am. Believin' I'm knocked out of time, they'll naturally suppose, seein' somebody 'round the farm-house, that it's one of you, an' there'll be no harm done to the scheme."

"It's a good idea, Zenas," Mr. Simpson said after a moment's thought. "Paul and I will gather in what sleep may be possible between now and daybreak. You are to waken us as soon as the night grows gray."

Then the owner of Silver Fox Farm laid himself down on the bed just vacated by Zenas, and Paul nestled close by his side, as indeed was necessary if two occupied that narrow resting place.

Zenas went about his duty of standing guard, determined that no member of the Downs family should leave the farm-house without his knowledge, and preparing himself for a possible encounter with John Ed Bingham by cutting from a clump of saplings a stout stick, which would serve either as cane or cudgel as might be desired.

It seemed to Paul as if he had but just fallen asleep when the watchman awakened him and his father with the information that day was breaking.

Mr. Simpson was on his feet in an instant, understanding that now was come the time when the smuggler and his friend might attempt to approach the farm-house in order to lay plans for the future with Mr. Downs, and he asked hurriedly:

"Have you kept watch over the house?"

"Ay, that I have," Zenas replied in a tone of satisfaction. "I'll answer for it that even a cat couldn't have gone in or out without my knowin' it. You see, as soon as the tide was about half-ebb there was no need of keepin' an eye on the cove, so I moved 'round the buildin's all the time, wishin' for my own satisfaction that that scoundrel of a John Ed Bingham might show himself. I'm allowin' if he an' I ever do come together agin there'll be little need for you to worry about what he can do afterward."

"You are to stay here, pretending to be unconscious if any one comes. Paul is to follow me, and one or the other of us will return with something in the way of breakfast for you."

"Don't put yourself out too much about that part of

it, so far's I'm concerned, 'cause while things are as they are on this blessed island, I can get along on mighty short allowance rather than have you take any chances."

"You shan't starve," Mr. Simpson replied laughingly, and when Paul had followed him out of the shanty he said in a low tone, "If I could find two or three men as ready to guard my interests as is Zenas Cushing, there would be no fear in my mind whatsoever but that Silver Fox Farm might be made to pay large returns on the investment."

"It should be possible to do so, sir."

"Yes, save that just now I am tied down to the island and cannot make other arrangements. It was unfortunate that I had so much confidence in Daniel Downs."

"But he may turn around from this out, and do exactly as you would have him, now he has learned that you are not to be trifled with."

"That is true, my boy; but yet I shall always be suspicious regarding his integrity. When a man or a boy does one wrong act he has destroyed the confidence of others, no matter how repentant he may be afterward."

When the two were come within a short distance of the farm-house, smoke could be seen rising from the chimney, although it was as yet hardly light, and Paul said as he pointed toward it:

"I am thinking Mr. Downs didn't sleep very well last night, otherwise he wouldn't be stirring so early."

"A bad conscience doesn't permit of sweet slumber."

"Do you count on going up to the woods to look for John Ed and his friend, sir?"

"No; our business is here. You may take station yonder, where Zenas came to grief, and I will move back and forth between the house and the cove."

"Mr. Downs will see that we are watching him."

"As to that I have no care. In fact, I prefer he should know we no longer trust him."

Paul was about to obey by skirting around the shed in order to arrive at the ruins, when Mr. Downs came out of the building looking decidedly woebegone as compared with his appearance of the previous morning.

"I'm mighty sorry, Mr. Simpson, that you couldn't trust me even over night, an' yet I don't s'pose there is any reason why you should. I heard you trampin' 'round here from the time I went to bed till I got up, an' it made my heart ache; that I'm tellin' you for a fact."

"It has distressed me exceedingly, Daniel," Mr. Simpson said firmly but sternly. "I had implicit confidence in you, and yet you betrayed me within twenty-four hours to aid those whom you know have no further regard for you than concerns their own wicked ends."

"I know all that as well as you can tell me, Mr. Simpson, an' have chewed it over ever since I came into the house," the farmer began contritely. "I don't reckon there's any sense in my tellin' you how sorry I am, because you can't believe me after all that's happened; but still it does seem as if you might take into

consideration how I was fixed. If so be you're willin', I'd like to tell the whole story, not 'cause it lets me out in any way, but perhaps you'll think after the tellin' of it that I was more weak than wicked."

"I am willing to listen to whatever you have to say, Daniel, and fancy that I have already guessed a good portion of it. You allowed yourself to be frightened by John Ed Bingham; that's the way I try to make excuses for you."

"And it's God's truth, sir! You know what he is—a man who, without showing his hand in it, has allers succeeded in doin' harm to them as crossed his path, an' I'm free to confess that I've been scared to go agin him. I don't believe I'd shown myself sich a coward if we was livin' on the mainland, where other folks are 'round; but way out here, with no one to lend a hand in case you get into trouble, it seemed like as if I'd *got* to keep on the good side of John Ed."

"He came here the night the foxes were brought ashore," Mr. Simpson said as Daniel Downs hesitated an instant.

"Ay, that he did, an' the lad saw his footprints on the sand."

"What did he want then?"

"First an' foremost he was kind'er riled up 'cause your boy wouldn't give him a tow, seein's how he was headed for Barren island; an' then agin he allowed you hadn't the right to stop him from comin' ashore."

"Was that why he came here in the schooner, and hid in your house?"

"Oh no, sir. I'm just tellin' you what kind of a

temper he was in the night the foxes were brought ashore."

"What did he want the second time?"

"I'm obliged to say, sir, as he had come to lay a plan for gettin' hold of them 'ere foxes. He reckoned that after bein' kept in the cages so long they'd be kind'er dazed an' bewildered, so it wouldn't be much of a job to knock 'em over. First off I fought hard agin it; I'd promised faithfully that no one should step foot on this 'ere island save with your permission; but I couldn't have put John Ed off then, though perhaps it might'er been done later if I'd called the boys an' we'd had a regular scrimmage. But he'd have kept it in for me, an' before the summer went by these 'ere buildin's would have been fired, or somethin' terrible happened to us. I know John Ed, an' so do you, Mr. Simpson. He's a bad egg, an' somehow or other, I can't explain it even to myself, he's got the knack of makin' it mighty tough for them as don't do 'cordin' to his idees."

"Well, what about that first visit?"

"There wasn't much come of it then, sir, indeed there wasn't. I held out agin havin' any finger in the pie, an' tried to show him that even if I was willin', it couldn't be done while Paul was here. So nothin' was really settled that night, except he warned me he'd come agin, an' he says to me, says he, 'Daniel Downs, when next I step foot on Barren island it'll be after them 'ere foxes, an' if you refuse to do what I call on you for, you'll get a taste of how John Ed Bingham pays off his debts.' I was scared, an' so was mother;

we allowed he could come mighty near servin' out hot dishes for us if we went agin his orders; but I hoped he wouldn't show up."

"Then he came in the schooner?" Mr. Simpson said questioningly.

"Yes, sir; an' as to that time I reckon you know pretty nigh as much as I. He an' another man walked into my house when I wasn't any more expectin' to see 'em than I was to have a visit from the angel Gabriel. They allowed to stay there till daylight, an' then sneak off inter the woods, countin' to get hold of some of the foxes 'twixt sunrise an' sunset. The schooner was comin' back along about nine o'clock the next night."

"Why wasn't that plan carried out?"

"I'm allowin' that you're able to answer the question as well as I can. John Ed is a master hand at snoopin' 'round, an' he suspicioned that some of you was on watch, so he said I'd got to hide him till dark, when he'd manage by hook or by crook to get inter the woods without your knowin' it. But you see all this mixed up the rest of the plan, 'cause he was countin' on the schooner's comin' back that night before he'd had time to make a try for the animiles, so Sam an' Ernest had to be brought into it, an' they're just as scared of John Ed as I am. It was schemed that some time after dark they should put off in the dory to warn the schooner against comin' into the cove, 'cause then we didn't know she'd carried away the topmast an' was laid up for repairs. I tell you, Mr. Simpson, it went agin my grain mightily, an' mother was pretty nigh worried to death about havin'

that old scoundrel 'round; but we couldn't seem to help ourselves. He'd got us into a snarl, an' when I stood out flat-footed an' said I was goin' to you with the whole story, he told me he'd swear that I'd sent word for him to come here. It seemed like I was in a hobble that couldn't be got out of anyhow, an' so I went from bad to worse, as a man always does when he starts wrong."

"You gave those men food last night?"

"Not what you might call a hearty supper; jest about enough to keep 'em from bein' downright hungry."

"Have you seen or heard of them since then?"

"No, sir, an' that you ought'er know for yourself, seein's how you've been trampin' 'round here all night. Now that the whole thing has come out, I'm askin' you to give me some kind of a show to prove that I ain't quite so black as you've painted me. We'll stay right here in the house, never so much as showin' our noses out of the doors, so long's you say the word, an' what mother has proposed is this: S'posen you live here—it'll be easier than keepin' watch on us from the outside? You've got to come when the meals are ready, an' why not stop where you can see for yourself that the boys, an' mother, an' I are tryin' to do the same as we would have done if John Ed Bingham hadn't come with his threats?"

"But you weren't disposed at the beginning to keep sharp watch over the foxes. Your sons on the first night believed they could as well crawl into the bushes to sleep, as to walk around."

"Yes, I'm admittin' it, Mr. Simpson; we did all that, an' yet it shouldn't count so hard agin us. It's been pretty tough for people like us, who don't hear what's goin' on in the world, to believe that any kind of a fox pelt is worth two hundred dollars. I know that's no business of mine; that we agreed to do certain things an' should have done 'em. Now we've kicked our own kettle over, an' the best that can be done is to try an' show we want to take a square turn about."

Mr. Simpson hesitated, and there was an expression on his face which must have caused Mr. Downs to believe that he did not intend to make a second trial after having been so grossly deceived, for the old man cried imploringly:

"Come in an' talk it over with mother! It may be she can put it better'n I do; but it's the solemn truth, Mr. Simpson, that the idee of doin' by you as we ought'er is as strong in my mind as God will permit."

"Very well, Mr. Downs. We'll meet you half-way. When breakfast is ready Paul and I will come in and have a heart-to-heart talk with all the family."

The farmer tried to give evidence of his gratitude for this partial promise, and struggled so earnestly and vainly to express himself that Paul's father said in a friendly tone:

"Never mind saying anything about it until we come together after breakfast. If you supplied Bingham with only a small amount of food last night, it is likely he will make some attempt to speak with you this morning."

"That's what I've been thinkin', sir, an' he's more

likely to be here before sunrise, when there's a chance you'll be off guard, than after the day has fully come. If I refuse him, as I give you my solemn word I shall, he'll not only threaten all kinds of mischief; but it ain't any two to one I don't get handled as rough as did that man of yours last night."

"He won't do anything of that kind, Daniel, because one of us will be here all the time, and so far as his threats are concerned you need have little fear. If you and your sons stand by me now, according to the bargain you made, on the strength of my forgetting what has just happened, I'll answer for it that when John Ed Bingham leaves this island it will be in the custody of the sheriff."

"I'm goin' to do just as you tell me, no matter what the consequences are," the farmer cried in a tone which carried with it the conviction of truth, and added suddenly, "What about that man of yours? How is he?"

"Not in as serious a condition as I had feared a few hours ago," Mr. Simpson replied guardedly. "I have great hopes that he will be comparatively well before night; but even though his recovery should be thus speedy, it will not affect the fact that a murderous assault was made upon him. Bingham has at last placed himself within reach of the law, and in order for the fellow to be put where you need have no fears concerning his threats, we have simply to keep him here on the island until it is our pleasure to send him away. All the boats, including your own, are in Swallow-Tailed cove, where they can be under the eye of whoever re-

mains at the wireless station. Therefore, unless he receives aid from you or yours, we have him fast."

"But the schooner will come back, sir, as soon as she has fitted her topmast."

"Her coming doesn't imply that he will go away in her. It is for us to make certain he can't."

Then Mr. Simpson would have walked away, evidently with the intention of going to the cove, but that Mr. Downs, holding him by the skirt of his coat, said imploringly:

"You ain't goin' to leave me now, are you, jest when it's the most certain John Ed will be out here? I ain't countin' on givin' up to him, for I'll have no more truck with that man from this time out; but to tell the truth I'm afraid of him. Nobody knows what he'll do when he gets roused. I'm allowin' he'll be like a ravishin' tiger when I tell him we won't give him anythin' to eat."

"Don't have any anxiety on that score, Daniel. I'll remain close about here, and if Bingham shows himself you shan't be alone to meet him."

Again Mr. Downs would have given words to the gratitude in his heart, and again his employer checked him, moving away a few paces to say in a low tone to Paul:

"You may go back to the station and tell Zenas all that you have heard. I shall stay here. You are to return for breakfast, and carry back to the shanty enough to satisfy Cushing's wants."

Then Mr. Simpson went into the house, and Paul made all speed toward the shanty, eager to learn what

might be the opinion of Zenas regarding this tardy repentance of the farmer and his family.

The alleged victim had taken the precaution to assume a position of semi-unconsciousness as he heard the lad coming, but roused very suddenly when Paul announced while he flung open the door of the shanty:

"Daniel Downs is mighty sorry because he let John Ed Bingham lead him astray."

"Well, he has need to be," was the unsympathetic reply. "Been whinin' to your father, eh?"

"He has made a clean breast of it, and swears that nothing of the kind shall ever happen again."

"Oh, he has?" and there was a note of incredulity in Zenas's voice. "When he got tied up so far that he couldn't take another step, he's come down an' says he's willin' to be forgiven, eh? I wonder how long he'd have run that 'ere rig of his if your father hadn't caught him foul, an' in such a way that he couldn't crawl out?"

"But he really is sorry, Zenas," Paul said seriously. "You should have heard him talk."

"I've seen how he acted when he thought he had things pretty much his own way, an' that was enough for me," was the curt reply. "I've known of folks who'd turn 'round mighty sorry for their misdoin's after they'd danced their jig to the end, an' I never had any very great faith in 'em. I s'pose Daniel thinks your father believed it all, jest 'cause he comes up an' whines like a baby, tellin' how John Ed Bingham frightened him into it, an' that he'll be given the care of

the foxes agin, with us toddlin' off an' sayin' it's all right."

"How did you know he claimed that John Ed frightened him into it?"

"That's about the only story he could tell to clear his own skirts. I don't allow Daniel Downs is any too quick-witted; but will give him credit for makin' up a reasonable kind of a yarn when he starts out. If he'd said he agreed of his own free will to help run off the foxes, why then his talk wouldn't have amounted to very much."

"But I really believe he means what he says, and that he and his sons will do in the future exactly as they have promised," Paul said emphatically, and Zenas added quite as positively:

"An' I don't. I wouldn't trust him any further'n across this room. When a man has lied to me once, I don't give him a chance the second time unless I'm willin' to call myself a fool. So your father took down everythin' he said jest like new milk, eh?"

"I don't know whether he did or not; but he has agreed to stay in the house instead of walking around outside, and it will be a simple matter for him to keep the whole family in view while taking his ease. They are expecting to see Bingham come out now, because he hadn't any more than food enough for supper."

"Well, they won't see him," Zenas cried, as if he had personal cause for complaint because his employer had listened to Daniel Downs's pitiful story. "John Ed Bingham has kept right along on the edge of the law all his life, spendin' pretty nigh every hour watchin'

out lest somebody would get him by the heels, an' I'll be willin' to stand still an' let you give me jest as hard a lick on the head as I got last night, if he shows himself while your father is in the house."

"But he must come out when his food is gone," Paul insisted, disappointed because Zenas had not received the news of the farmer's repentance as thankfully as it seemed he should have done.

"John Ed will go hungry a long while before he steps his foot near where your father is waitin', an' if you're puttin' all your faith on starvin' him out, why I'm tellin' you it's a case of leanin' on a mighty slender reed, 'cause that old smuggler knows of more'n one way to skin a cat."

CHAPTER XIII

A CRY FOR HELP

PAUL did not believe Zenas was in the right when he predicted that John Ed Bingham was "too old a bird to be caught by chaff," yet it was hardly worth while to argue against it, for within the next twelve hours, unless indeed the old smuggler could bear the pangs of hunger longer than seemed possible, the matter would be definitely settled.

For his own part the lad felt confident that the trespassers on Silver Fox Farm would soon be made prisoners, to be sent to the mainland whenever it suited his father's purpose, and for the time being it appeared as if, now that Mr. Downs and his sons had been brought to see the evil of their ways, there would no longer be any serious impediment to the task of raising foxes, provided, of course, the animals finally came to feel at home on Barren island.

"I'm to bring you breakfast," he said, thus abruptly changing the conversation, and Zenas asked in surprise:

"What's the meanin' of that? Does your father count on makin' it look as if I was nigh to death a spell longer? 'Cordin' to the way I size it up, he'll be needin' all the help that can be found on this blessed place, an' can't afford to have me loafin' 'round the shanty."

"His orders were that you should remain under

cover a while longer, most likely until he feels more certain that the Downs family are really repentant, and I'm to feed you," Paul replied with a laugh, whereupon Zenas indulged in a gesture of impatience, as if he believed this plan of concealing his real condition to be childish.

"Of course it ain't for me to say what shall be done here, 'cause your father's the boss; but I'm bettin' the biggest kind of a big apple that before this day is very much older he'll have need of me outside."

"Then I allow you'll be cured of all your troubles in a twinkling. Does your head ache this morning?"

"I'm as chipper as a sparrer, an' keen to do my share toward settin' things to rights on this 'ere island. I'd like to run things jest about an hour, an' if fox farmin' didn't hum before I got through, I'd get you to tell me the reason why."

"What would you do?"

"Pack the Downs family off in the old power dory inside of thirty minutes, so's to make certain they didn't have another chance to play any tricks. Then I'd go for that miserable smuggler an' his friend with a shotgun, an' wouldn't be overly careful how I handled it."

"You are too bloodthirsty altogether," Paul cried with a hearty laugh. "Want to get even with John Ed for that blow he gave you, eh?"

"Well, it stands to reason I'd like to square matters; but whether he had ever hit me or not, I'd bring him out of the woods to where he couldn't do the foxes harm, if there was any virtue in powder an' shot."

"Since you are supposed to be lying at the point of death, and because it's my duty to play the part of nurse, so far as feeding you goes, I reckon I may as well go back to the farm-house for breakfast, in order to be ready for business when Ned gets into the Sea-view station."

Then Paul walked leisurely toward the house, feeling wonderfully free from care, since matters had apparently been straightened out fairly well, and before he had traversed half the necessary distance the horn was sounded vigorously.

"Mrs. Downs counts on feeding us promptly, no matter how much of a snarl her husband and sons may have gotten themselves into," the lad said to himself with a certain sense of satisfaction, for it pleased him to know, as he believed he did, that the members of the family were doing their best to obey orders.

Mr. Downs and the boys were unusually silent when Paul drew his chair up to the table with a good appetite for the fried pork and fish which Mrs. Downs had prepared in great abundance. Neither Sam nor Ernest had any alleged witty remarks to make in disparagement of the wireless station, but seemingly devoted all their attention to the food before them, while Mr. Downs was on the alert for sounds betokening the approach of the men who had been hiding in the woods, and did not appear to be enjoying the morning meal particularly well.

Mrs. Downs bustled here and there, intent only on feeding the family to the utmost of their several capac-

ities, she believing that there was no antidote like food for troubles of any kind, while at the same time she was cooking two or three savory messes for the supposed invalid at the shanty.

"It does really seem to me as if Mr. Cushin' ought'er come down here, where he can be comfortable," she said solicitously when Paul had risen from the table in token that his hunger was satisfied. "Why not speak to him about it? He shall have the spare room, an' I'll do all any mortal woman can to make him feel at home."

"Perhaps you had better speak to father in regard to it," Paul replied as he went toward the door. "He will come in to breakfast now, and you can talk the matter over."

Mr. Simpson was standing guard near the woodshed when Paul came out, and instead of asking any questions he said abruptly:

"You are to remain here, watching carefully the edge of the woods. At first sight of the men give an alarm at once. I shan't spend many minutes at the table."

Then Mr. Simpson went into the house, and Paul stood at the post assigned him, scrutinizing closely the line of foliage in front of him; but seeing nothing to betoken the whereabouts of John Ed and his partner in crime.

Ten minutes later Mr. Simpson came from the farm-house to say hurriedly:

"Now you may carry Zenas's breakfast to the shanty, and it will be well for you to stay there until

Ned is ready to open communication with the island. Tell Cushing to keep watch over the boats."

"What shall I say to Ned when he calls?"

"Get what information he has to give, and then ask him to wait until you can repeat it to me. I shall remain here or in the house, where I can have a view of the woods from the window, and all the Downs family will be with me."

"Are you thinking of sending to Seaview for help, sir?"

"I have not yet decided. If we could get our hands on Bingham and the man he has with him, there would be no need, at least, not until it becomes necessary for me to go to the mainland."

At this point Mrs. Downs interrupted the conversation by announcing that breakfast was ready for "that poor, sick man," and Paul hastened to carry it to the shanty.

Although Zenas did not approve of having his "meals served in his room," he made a vigorous attack upon the food, while Paul adjusted the wireless apparatus for communication with Seaview.

"Count on findin' your chum 'tendin' to business so soon in the mornin'?" Zenas asked curiously, for it was not yet six o'clock.

"If Captain Tobi Thompson had anything of importance to tell father, Ned will be on hand early; but under any circumstances he'll be at his station before seven," and Paul began sending out the call, after which he switched on the receiver, with the result that immediately came the reply:

"O. K. n-d."

"Anything new?"

"Yes; how is it with you?"

"We are all right, though we've had a lively night. Will explain when we have more time."

Then came the message from Ned, which Paul wrote out as it was received, Zenas standing at his shoulder that he might read the words:

"Captain Thompson says schooner will leave port this forenoon. He believes she is bound for Barren island. Craft hails from Eastport, and one of the crew claims Bingham owns half of her. Tough crowd on board. Captain Thompson advises that you call help from here, else serious trouble may come to the farm."

"An' yet you allowed John Ed would show himself this mornin' jest 'cause he felt a little hungry!" Zenas muttered as he read the message. "The old villain knows the schooner must put in here mighty soon, an' he's countin' on squarin' matters then."

Paul gave but little heed to this remark, for he was explaining to Ned that it would be necessary for him to show the message to his father before making reply.

"I shall stay here as long as you need me; I've got my books, and can put in all the time necessary," the operator at Seaview replied, and Paul hurried away to show his father what he believed to be startling news.

Mr. Simpson did not appear surprised when he read the words, but remained in thought so long that finally Paul asked impatiently:

"Are you counting to send for help?"

"Perhaps that would be the wisest course; but I am

eager to capture Bingham myself. Will Ned wait awhile at the station? If so I would like to consider the matter more thoroughly."

"He promises to stay there as long as you wish."

"That is good! Tell him I will send word before ten o'clock, and in the meanwhile he is to let you know when the schooner leaves the harbor."

Paul hurried back to repeat his father's words, and, quite as a matter of course, Zenas was eager to know what had been decided upon.

"It ain't any two to one that he won't wait till it's too late," Cushing grumbled when the lad told him what had been Mr. Simpson's decision. "He'd be wiser to have the sheriff send over three or four men, an' snake John Ed out of his hidin' place, wherever it may be. As for catchin' that old fox with what crew we've got here, not knowin' how the Downs family may turn, it's all poppycock."

Paul hardly heard what had been said, so occupied was he in sending word to his friend, as well as in receiving the following message, evidently sent by Ned on his own account.

"Captain Thompson seemed to think your father would be foolish if he didn't make all possible preparations against the arrival of the schooner. Mansfield's power boat can be hired to take across as many men as may be needed. Shall I ask him to hold her at the pier until your father makes up his mind?"

"Better let the whole matter rest as it is for two hours. If you will stay in the station I can call any time before then, if necessary for——"

The operator was interrupted in the sending of his message by the crackling and snapping of the wires in a manner which caused Zenas to step back in alarm, even as had Sam, and Paul said impatiently, but as if speaking to himself:

"Now what's gone wrong? That doesn't sound like anything I ever heard when there was trouble."

He had hardly begun to examine the apparatus when Ned succeeded in clicking off the words:

"Are you having——"

Again came the crackling, which broke off that series of sound waves coming from the direction of Seaview, or, mingling with them, made a most confusing noise.

Paul sat helplessly staring at the instrument, believing everything was in good working order, and yet failing to understand why there should be such a conflict in the air on an almost cloudless morning, with no more than a pleasant summer breeze rippling the waters of the sea.

"Has the thing got away from you?" Zenas asked curiously, and yet at the same time giving slight evidence of alarm.

"That's what I don't know," Paul replied. "There's no reason why it should not work——"

He ceased speaking suddenly, and quickly adjusted the instrument to longer sound waves. Immediately that was done came with startling distinctness the ominous letters: "C-d-q, c-d-q, c-d-q."

"Some one from out to sea is calling us in distress," he cried, so much surprised, and perhaps bewildered, for an instant as to give no heed to the fact that he

should answer as soon as might be this appeal for help. "A craft equipped with a wireless apparatus is in trouble."

"Can't you find out who she is, or where she's layin'?" Zenas cried, growing literally wild with excitement. "Do you count on sittin' there like a chump an' lettin' them yell for help?"

"I declare I had forgotten that there was anything I could do," Paul replied, not yet fully recovered from the maze of bewilderment which had come over him at this the first signal of danger he had ever caught from the antenna.

Again the letters were repeated, and it seemed even to Zenas, who knew nothing whatsoever of telegraphing, that they sounded ominous, appealing.

The lad was wholly ignorant of the code used in the maritime service; nor did he stop to consider in what form the reply should be made; but raising the key with tremulous fingers, he clicked off:

"What's wanted?" Where are you?"

"This is the yacht *Nera,* from New York to Mount Desert. Struck a derelict this morning, and in danger of sinking. Who are you?"

"A station on Barren island, twenty miles eastward from the mainland."

"Have you any means by which to get to our assistance?"

"A 6-horse Hampton boat; could carry twenty people, or tow a small craft."

"Come at once, or, if possible, send a tug from mainland."

Even at the expense of valuable time, and not daring to wait sufficiently long to get his father's advice, Paul sent out the words:

"This station only a small one established to be used with another at Seaview. No steam tug at that place. I haven't power enough to send as far as Portland."

Paul had written out, as a matter of course, all the words received from the yacht which was in distress, and Zenas quite naturally had read the message as fast as set down. Now, without knowing what reply the lad had sent, Cushing asked sharply:

"Can't them folks tell you where they are? It wouldn't be such a terrible job for us to put out to them in your new boat."

He had hardly more than ceased speaking when came the words:

"We are perhaps twenty miles southwest of Matinicus Light. Can keep afloat five or six hours. Two boats useless, and the remaining one not sufficient to carry half our people."

"Where would that be, Zenas?" Paul asked hurriedly as he pointed to the written message. "About how far from here?"

"Somewhere thirty-five or forty miles, I should say. It couldn't be further, an' if you pressed the Hampton boat she ought'er do that much inside of four hours. Tell 'em so, an' if so be they're in as bad stress as seems, you an' I'll make the venture."

"But we can't go away while John Ed——"

"Let John Ed hang himself! What do silver foxes amount to when there's a yacht full of people that are

likely to be drowned? Tell 'em we'll go, an' I'll run down to let your father know what's happened."

Without waiting for a reply Zenas started off at full speed, and Mrs. Downs, who was standing in the door of the farm-house speaking with Mr. Simpson, gave vent to a cry of terror as she saw him, who was supposed to be lying at the point of death, coming at full speed, waving his arms excitedly.

Zenas's mind was in such a ferment that only with the greatest difficulty could he tell a connected story, and it became necessary for Mr. Simpson to ask many questions before he could arrive at a thorough understanding of what was on foot. Then, as a matter of course, he exclaimed hurriedly:

"If it be possible for you and Paul to come up with the wreck in time, set off without delay; but the question is whether you will be able to find her."

"She should be in view a long distance away on such a day as this, an' while I don't claim to be anythin' great of a sailor, I'd be ashamed to say I couldn't come somewhere near strikin' a twenty-mile spot southwest of Matinicus."

"Is it possible I can be of any service?" Mr. Simpson cried as Zenas started back at his best pace to acquaint Paul with the fact that his father had the same as commanded a rescue to be attempted.

"I don't see how three could do any more'n two, an' Paul an' I ought'er be able to tackle the job, if it's within the power of anybody here," Zenas cried, and so swift was his pace that he had come nearly to the door of the shanty before the last words were uttered.

"Heard anything more?" he asked breathlessly, and Paul, who had but just ceased working the telegraph key, replied:

"The operator on the yacht tells me he has been sounding his distress call since early daylight without receiving any answer, and it would seem as if we were the only ones who could be summoned in time to be of assistance. The port bow has been stove badly; but after shifting everything movable, they have succeeded in raising it so far above the surface of the sea that it is possible, by working all the pumps, to keep her afloat. If the wind should spring up at noon, there's little or no chance she would swim very long."

"We are to start off this minute 'cordin' to your father's orders," Zenas cried, literally dragging Paul from his chair, and when the two were come to the door of the shanty both uttered cries of dismay.

Owing to the fact that the Hampton boat had been moored in Swallow-Tailed cove to prevent the possibility of her being stolen by Bingham, it seemed to a certainty she was imprisoned there at the very moment when human lives depended upon getting her into deep water.

"It can't be done," Paul cried helplessly, but continuing to run toward the shore of the cove. "We won't be able to get out over the rocks!"

"We never shall know if we stand here lookin' at her," Zenas cried angrily. "It strikes me we'd better take the chances of wreckin' her than give over tryin' to do anythin' to help those poor wretches who've got no one to depend on but us."

"But if we wreck her, how much better off would they be?"

"I'm not allowin' that we are goin' to do anythin' of the kind. It won't be such a terrible easy matter, I'll admit, to take her out over that shallow water; but it seems to me the two of us ought'er have sense enough to do it, if so be there's an inch to spare between her keel and the rocks. Shall we try it?"

"Of course we'll try it," Paul replied, now so far recovered from the first daze of bewilderment and fear as to be keenly alive to the situation. "If we can hold her until the very moment when the swell comes in, it should be possible to do the trick."

Zenas, instead of waiting to hear the lad's explanations, or plans, whichever they may be called, had seized upon Mr. Downs's dory, which was lying far inland, dragging her across the sands as if he had the strength of a dozen men in his arms, and when Paul came up to lend a hand the task was finished.

Zenas hardly waited for his companion to clamber inboard before he pushed the dory off, and it seemed to Paul as if they were on board the Hampton boat within a minute from the time of leaving the shanty.

Both understood that to waste a few seconds might mean the lives of human beings, and they labored with feverish haste, Zenas weighing anchor while Paul started the motor, both working to such advantage that when she was freed from the ground it was possible to turn the screw.

"You take the wheel, Zenas, and I'll stand by the

motor. Put her through yonder, near where that big rock shows up, for unless I am mistaken that's the only spot on the reef where we can hope to get across. I'll check her speed until the swell comes, an' then send her forward for all she's worth."

Neither of these landsmen who were putting out in the vain hope of saving those aboard the crippled yacht, had given any heed to their own safety. Instead of making Mr. Downs's dory fast astern when they came on board the Hampton boat, so great was their excitement and haste that the painter had been untouched, and the little craft was drifting toward the westerly shore, leaving them without means of saving their own lives in case the larger craft should strike the reef with sufficient force to stave her timbers.

Nor, as has been seen, did they take with them either food or water, but had set off on this almost hopeless attempt without anything whatsoever to minister to their own comfort.

"We ought'er kept the dory alongside in case we hit them 'ere rocks," Zenas cried as he headed the bow of the boat a few feet to the eastward of the huge boulder that rose across the mouth of Swallow-Tailed cove, as if forbidding entrance to any from the outside. "It'll be a bad pickle for us if we strike too heavy."

"Never mind that part of it, so that we get out in time."

"It wasn't the gettin' out that was worryin' me," Zenas replied grimly. "It was the chance we'd be stuck half way, with not much of anything left beneath our feet."

Under almost any other circumstances Paul would have literally quivered with fear in taking such desperate chances as were before them. He knew that at the most, providing they came to the obstructions in the mouth of the cove at exactly the right moment, there could not be more than four or five inches of water to spare, and if peradventure the swell receded before the entire length of the boat had passed over, then must she be flung upon the rocks, where the surf would speedily beat her to pieces.

Fortunately, however, he had in mind only that which was to be attained; saw before him only those people aboard the shattered yacht who had none but him and Zenas to depend upon for safety, and failed almost entirely to heed the peril which he was encountering, because of the danger to those so far away.

Now checking the speed of the motor, and again driving at full speed, Paul manœuvred so successfully that they met the incoming wave in time to ride directly on its crest. For one instant the two literally held their breath in suspense, expecting each second to hear that grinding of timbers upon the rocks beneath which would tell that the Hampton boat had come to her grave, and then she darted out like a bird that skims the surface of the sea, dashing the spray on either side of her bow as if exulting that she had escaped the prison which would have held her helpless.

"That's what I call a pretty neat job, an' a close one!" Zenas cried in a tone of triumph as he swung the helm down to bring the gallant little boat on that course which he believed would bring them to the

scene of peril. "We got out by the skin of our teeth; fifteen minutes later it couldn't have been done, an' seein's how we've had such luck at the start, I'm countin' we'll pull through in great shape."

"To find a small yacht twenty miles southwest of Matinicus, isn't going to be anything like running for the harbor of Seaview from Barren island," Paul said doubtfully, for now that it had been possible to start out on the voyage for the purpose of life-saving, he was beginning to question their ability to continue it successfully.

"On a day like this we ought'er see a decent-sized yacht fifteen miles away, so it stands to reason we've got that bigness of a circle to go an' come in, an' if we don't strike her, I'm goin' to allow that both of us are wooden heads."

"She may have been picked up before we get there," Paul suggested.

"So much the better for us."

"Yes, except that we shall go on hunting and hunting, when she's in a place of safety."

"All right," Zenas cried cheerfully. "We'll keep on huntin', an' if nothin' comes of it we'll have the satisfaction of knowin' we did our level best."

Not until that instant did Paul realize in what condition matters had been left on the island, and now, as all the possible complications presented themselves to his mind, he cried in a tone of distress:

"But what will become of father? I didn't explain to Ned why I couldn't call him again to-day, and the men who might have been sent from Seaview can't be

summoned. Bingham and his friend can come out of the woods, and, with the Downs family to help them, turn Silver Fox Farm upside down!"

"That 'ere's a mighty cheerful picture you're drawin'," Zenas suggested grimly, and Paul cried, impatient in his anxiety:

"It's no more than may happen. While thinking of those in distress, we should have taken heed to father's situation. I ought to have stayed in the station long enough to tell Ned what call I had picked up out to sea, and warned him to send some one over to Barren island."

"Yes, an' if you had done all that we wouldn't been able to get this 'ere boat out'er Swallow-Tailed cove."

"We might have gone out and then come ashore again from the westerly side, long enough to send a message to Ned," Paul said sadly.

"Ay, we could have spent half an hour or more fiddlin' 'round in that way, when them poor creeters out in the yacht are countin' every minute 'twixt them an' the other world."

Paul's distress of mind was keen. He realized that the cry for help which had come through the air must be answered at every hazard, and without the slightest loss of time. On the other hand, he knew only too well how great would be the danger menacing his father if it chanced that Bingham and his comrade learned that Mr. Simpson had no other on the island to whom he could look for assistance, save the members of the Downs family.

As the Hampton boat sped on over the foam-flecked waves Paul suffered the keenest distress of mind, fearing one instant lest they should not arrive in time to save those who had appealed to him for aid, and again feeling almost positive that by answering the summons he had worked grievous injury to his father.

"I'll tell you what it is, lad," Zenas said after a time, as he came to understand somewhat of that which was in the lad's mind, "there's no sense in huntin' 'round to gather in trouble. I'm allowin' your father, with Downs an' the boys to help, will hold his own on Silver Fox Farm——"

"It isn't three hours since you declared that no dependence could be put in the Downs family; that they would turn against father whenever John Ed Bingham raised his finger."

"True, that's what I did say, lad; but when your father tells 'em where we've gone, they'd be the meanest kind of crawlin' creeters if they didn't brace up an' show themselves men until we could get back. I don't have any confidence in that old farmer and his two shiftless sons; but I'm bound to believe there's jest a glimmer of manhood in 'em—enough to hold 'em to their duty at such a time as this. How fast is our boat goin'?"

Paul was surprised by the abruptness of the question; but replied promptly, and with no little pride:

"The builders guaranteed that she should make ten miles an hour, and she's doing her best now. What started you out on that tack?"

"It stands us in hand to keep what you might call dead reckonin', so's to know when we come, as near as guess-work can tell us, to the place where the yacht was layin' when she telegraphed you. Now I'm allowin' we've got a voyage of forty miles, an' it's for us to keep pretty sharp watch over the time, else we're like to run a good bit out of our course."

CHAPTER XIV

THE "NERA"

NOT for one instant would Paul have speculated upon the possibility of turning a deaf ear to the cry for help which had come through the air; but yet, now when there was nothing to be done save sit idly in front of the motor to make certain it did that for which it had been intended, he could not prevent his thoughts from going back to the desolate island where his father was, as it seemed to him, pitted single-handed against Bingham and his companion, as well as every member of the Downs family.

"I can't believe that the farmer and his sons felt as repentant as they acted," he said after a long pause, during which Zenas had been straining his eyes into the distance, as if believing it possible to see the disabled yacht whose master had appealed on the "wings of the morning" for assistance.

"Well, s'posen you can't, that don't change matters, does it?" Zenas asked almost sharply. "I'm free to admit that I don't believe they'd have come down on their marrow bones if your father hadn't got 'em dead to rights; but there's no need, now we're playin' the life-boat act, for us to hark back to Barren island huntin' for trouble. Let's do this job up in good shape first, an' then I'll set to with you for a reg'lar spell of worryin'."

"To think of what may be happening on the island

while we are forced to remain here in the boat comparatively idle, doesn't hinder us from doing what we may in the way of rescuing the yachtsmen."

"True for you, lad, but it makes us mighty uneasy in mind. See here," and Zenas turned as if his anger had been aroused, to face the lad. "I've got my doubts 'bout that Downs crowd, same's you have; but when I'm where I can't raise a finger to prevent them from cuttin' monkey shines, I don't count on frettin' over it."

Then Zenas fell to figuring exactly where the disabled craft might be, and how they could best come at her, until Paul had in a certain degree banished the dismal forebodings from his mind to speculate upon the possibility of being able to render the needed assistance.

If the Hampton boat had been a living thing, understanding all that was required of her, she could not have carried out her portion of the rescue more swiftly or surely. She forged steadily ahead, Paul watching all the bearings jealously lest they become heated, and more than once Zenas insisted that the little craft was doing considerably better than had been guaranteed by her builders.

"I allow that we're headed as straight for the place where the yacht was to be found when you heard her wireless contrivance clickin', as if we had the line marked out on a chart," he said when they had been an hour or more on their errand of mercy and Barren island was no longer to be seen astern. "The only trouble is that she may have been picked up by some other

craft, an' we'll go blunderin' 'round, same as you feared, till nightfall."

"When we have come to about the spot where you believed she was, how long do you allow we'd be warranted in hunting?"

"Not more'n a couple of hours. If we can't pick her up in that time I'll allow that she has either gone to the bottom, or been taken in tow by them as happened across her."

"It's a good deal like hunting for a needle in a haystack, after all," Paul said with a long-drawn sigh as he strove earnestly to prevent his thoughts from straying back to where his father might, at that moment, be struggling against overwhelming odds.

"I allow it may be, lad, but at the same time I ain't goin' to admit anything of the kind."

Then Zenas began a long-winded story of a rescue at sea such as he had heard from old sailors, talking rather to prevent Paul from dwelling upon affairs at the island, than from any hope of really amusing the lad, and the minutes crept on until the story-teller interrupted his not very entertaining tale to say suddenly:

"Look at your watch now, an' tell me how long we've been away from the island."

To Paul's great surprise he found that three hours and a half had elapsed since the Hampton boat came out so gallantly from the dangers of Swallow-Tailed cove, and Zenas cried triumphantly as he pointed over the port bow, at the same time that he changed his course slightly:

"An' we've come as straight for that 'ere yacht as

a crow could have flown! Unless I've lost the use of my eyes, there she is."

"Where?" Paul cried eagerly, striving in vain to see on the horizon anything that resembled a craft in distress.

"Look dead ahead as we're goin'. Can't you see a speck down yonder?"

"I can make out something rising and falling on the swell; but it may be nothing save a bit of floating timber."

"It's bound to be more'n that, lad, else we couldn't see hide nor hair of it so far away. It's a steamer of some kind, that's certain, for if they had any canvas spread it would be glistenin' white in the sunlight. I'm allowin' it's the same craft what telegraphed to you, an' if that's a fact, we've done as pretty a bit of sailorin' as any man could wish to see. Think of drivin' straight away from Barren island, with nothin' more to shape a course on than what you got with the wireless, an' hittin' the mark to a dot!"

It really was wonderful that Zenas should have been able to come up with the yacht from which the distress signals had been sent, if indeed yonder tiny speck was the *Nera,* and Paul began to believe that his companion was an extraordinarily able seaman.

"There's more luck than wit about it," Zenas said modestly when Paul began to praise him. "I'm allowin' it was set down in the books that we should lend them poor creeters a hand, an' this 'ere craft has much the same as come, without bein' helped by us, to the place we wanted to find."

As the moments passed that tiny speck in the distance gradually increased in size and shape until there could no longer be any question as to what it was, and Paul shouted aloud in joy, for now was it possible he could render the assistance which had been asked for through the ether. Even at that moment of excitement he smiled at the thought of what Mr. Downs and his sons might say regarding wireless telegraphy, when they knew that by answering the appeal which had come on the morning air, it was his good fortune to be able to relieve the suffering of others.

"There goes her flag!" Zenas cried when the Hampton boat was within three or four miles of the disabled craft, and Paul could see that a dark speck which had been waving half-way up the mast on which was the antenna, was being raised and lowered in joyful greeting.

The yacht was not more than sixty feet in length, and one could but be surprised that such a small craft had been equipped with a wireless apparatus; but her owner, if he was on board at that moment, must have congratulated himself on his wise precaution.

The little vessel's power was evidently obtained from a gasolene or electric engine, for no smoke-stack could be seen, neither did she carry spars for canvas. She was rising and falling on the waves in a pitifully helpless manner, her bow cocked high in the air, doubtless to raise the wounded portion above the surface, and the streams of water gushing from the hull told how heavily the sea was boarding her.

"She hasn't got very many people on board," Paul

said, noting that no more than five or six men overhung the rail watching the approach of the Hampton boat.

"It stands to reason some of 'em are below, workin' for their lives; but at the most she can't have so many but that we'll be able to take 'em all aboard this craft," Zenas replied, and Paul cried as if such a suggestion gave him pain:

"Surely you wouldn't think of abandoning a beautiful steamer like her! If there has been no more damage done than the crushing of the bow, it should be a simple task to repair her."

"Ay, lad, if she was in port; but you mustn't think that this boat of yours, little dandy though she is, can do the work of a tug boat. Of course we're bound to get that yacht inter harbor if it is to be done without too great risk; but I'm doubtin' whether we could make much of a fist at towin', even though the weather holds fine."

There was no opportunity for further speculation as to what the Hampton boat might or might not be able to do, for by this time the rescuers had come so near that one of the men on board the yacht leaped up on the rail, as he shouted:

"Ahoy! Are you the people we talked with by wireless?"

"The very same," Paul cried in reply. "Stand by to pass us a line, and we'll drop just astern of you. The swell is too heavy for us to come alongside."

Zenas steered the Hampton boat in a wide circle that she might be brought under the starboard quarter, and

in a twinkling she was made fast, the gentleman who had hailed her, and who was evidently the owner, leaning over the stern rail to ask:

"Have you got power enough to take us in tow?"

"Our motor is only 6-horse," Paul replied doubtfully. "Is your engine out of commission?"

"There must have been some defect in the tail shaft, and when, after striking the derelict just before daylight this morning, the screw was suddenly reversed to back us off, the entire propeller carried away. We are taking in nearly as much water astern as we can throw out with the pumping motor."

"Haven't you been able to get any reply, save mine, by the wireless?"

"We have been sending out calls ever since you promised to come in search of us, but have heard nothing. We are not equipped for long-distance work, our apparatus being more in the nature of a plaything than a serviceable outfit, though, now since you've come, we have reason to be thankful that we dabbled in wireless telegraphy to the extent of putting up that spar."

"How much are you hurt?" Zenas interrupted.

"The port bow is stove just at the water line, for a width of five planks. We have it patched with canvas, and might contrive to live even in heavy weather if it was not for the trouble astern. In case the wind comes up ever so little we must speedily founder. It would be selfish for me to ask that you do more than take us off, for I suppose the little *Nera* must be left to her fate, yet I would be willing to pay her full value if she could be taken into port."

"We don't want pay for such service as this," Paul said quickly. "If we can tow her, I'm ready and willing to make the attempt; but because of the situation of affairs as we left them on Barren island, I do not feel warranted in spending very much extra time. As it is, we could not return to that place, doing our best, before dark, and then you would be twenty-two miles from the mainland."

"Is there a harbor at the island?" the yachtsman asked.

"Yes, a good one for a craft as small as this."

"Suppose one of you come aboard and look us over? But first it is best to introduce ourselves. I am Chester Sawtelle, owner and master of the *Nera*. The gentlemen next me are Joseph Lumley, and Samuel Brownson, both of New York, and my guests. Our crew numbers seven, including the steward and cook."

"And I am Paul Simpson, whose father is experimenting with raising silver foxes on Barren island. My comrade is Zenas Cushing, who is to help me in the work."

"Raising silver foxes!" Mr. Sawtelle cried in surprise, and then realizing that he had sent for assistance to save the lives of himself and his companions, rather than to gain information of fox raising, he added in a tone of entreaty, "Will you come on board, Master Simpson, look at the extent of our injuries, and decide whether you will make an attempt to tow the yacht to Barren island? I have not as yet thanked you for answering——"

"There is no reason why you should do so. It would

be a mighty poor kind of a fellow who wouldn't do all he could at such a time as this, when human lives are in danger. Zenas had better go aboard, for he knows more about such matters than I do."

Cushing did not wait for the matter to be discussed. He had been burning with curiosity to see the yacht from her own deck, and the moment his name was mentioned he scrambled like a monkey over the stern rail, using both hands and feet to work his way up the hawser by which the Hampton boat was made fast.

Mr. Sawtelle and his friends disappeared from view of Paul when Zenas was on board, and during ten long minutes nothing could be seen of them. Then it was that Cushing showed himself as he over-hung the stern rail, and said in a business-like tone:

"I've got the idee, Paul, that it wouldn't be a terrible job to yank this 'ere craft inter sich a port as can be found on Barren island. Now that the screw has been carried away, there's nothin' to drag water, an' I'm allowin' we could make three or four miles an hour with her behind us."

"At that rate we wouldn't make Barren island, even if the weather held good, until morning," Paul said in dismay.

"Ay, it would take as long as that."

"And father may be in sore need of us this very moment!"

"He may, an' then agin it might be the other way. I don't allow John Ed would show up very strong till that 'ere schooner got inter the cove——"

"She was to leave Seaview this morning, and may be there even now!"

"You don't allow, lad, there's any chance of that! She's got to have wind in order to make twenty-two miles within twelve hours, an' I'm askin' you whether the breeze is piping up very strong?"

Until this moment Paul had not realized that there was no more than the suspicion of a breeze to be felt. During the voyage from Barren island the movement of the Hampton boat through the water had been sufficient to set the air in motion directly in her vicinity; but now she was lying still, the lad understood that the wind had died out into a flat calm.

"Unless a breeze springs up John Ed's schooner will drift 'round outside of Seaview, an' I ain't countin' we'll get anythin' that might be called a gale 'twixt now an' mornin'. The chances are even, if we take this 'ere yacht in tow, that we'll get to Barren island in time to lend a hand in whatever may be goin' on. I've told Mr. Sawtelle jest how you are fixed, an' he agrees not to yip if you cast off the tow line before we've made a mile. Then agin, Paul," and here Zenas lowered his voice to a whisper, "can't you see that if we take this crowd back to the island, John Ed won't be able to cut many of his didoes, seein's how we'll have help enough to knock all the mischief out of his ugly head?"

This last argument was a strong one. Paul had asked himself more than once since the Hampton boat left Barren island, how his father, Zenas and himself would be able to oppose the crew of the schooner if

they should boldly attempt to land in search of, or to aid Bingham, without being able to arrive at any satisfactory conclusion.

If, however, the *Nera* might be towed into the cove, her crew could, and undoubtedly would, do all in their power to assist the owner of Silver Fox Farm, and while they remained there at anchor matters would be conducted in strict accordance with his father's wishes.

"Seems like a mighty good trick, to happen along there with a gang big enough to swallow the Downs family as well as John Ed an' his friend, don't it?" Zenas suggested with the intent to influence Paul's decision. "It wouldn't be a case of keepin' awake night after night, stealin' forty winks of sleep here an' forty there; but we'd have a force that would make standin' guard seem like child's play."

"Do you really believe we can tow the yacht?"

"Indeed I do, lad. You wouldn't hesitate to hook on to Captain Tobi's sloop, an' 'cordin' to the build of this craft she'll slip through the water a good deal easier than that clumsy old drogher."

"If the wind springs up, so that there is danger the schooner can get over from Seaview, I'd feel that we must make all speed for the island, even if this yacht was left to sink."

"Mr. Sawtelle understands that part of it, lad, for I've made the whole thing plain, an' he agrees not to say a word if you make up your mind to abandon this craft, after takin' all hands off."

"We'll try it," Paul replied, speaking doubtfully, as if not thoroughly convinced he was acting the wiser

part, and when the announcement had been made Mr. Sawtelle showed his head above the rail.

"I didn't want to urge you to that which you were opposed, Master Simpson," he said in a tone of satisfaction; "but now that you have decided to help us save the little *Nera,* I must say that you shall be paid well for the service."

"I'm not doing it for money," Paul cried stoutly. "If there was no more to it than that, I'd have been bound for Barren island half an hour ago, for I feel very anxious concerning father."

"I believe I understand what is in your mind, and am free to confess that it seems to me he will be in little danger between now and to-morrow morning, when we should arrive if the weather holds good. Those men who are bent on killing the foxes have no reason to believe you will remain away very long, therefore, if they have common sense, must wait until they know exactly where you may be found, in order to safe-guard themselves. When we do arrive it will probably be quite a while before I can get a tug to tow the yacht to where she can be repaired, and in the meantime your father will have the assistance of all our crew and company."

"That last will be very welcome, sir," Paul replied, and added hurriedly, "There is no good reason why we should spend time talking when we might be going ahead. I suppose we will do better to take a long tow-line."

"That is my idea, unless you pull the *Nera* down by the head so much that the water comes in through

the bow. Will you take one of my engineers aboard to spell you at the motor?"

"I had rather stay here myself. I know the boat better than a stranger can, and will be able to get more speed out of her."

"We'll send a hawser aboard at once," and both Mr. Sawtelle and Zenas disappeared from view again.

In the bow of the Hampton boat, made fast to the timbers on either side, was a stout timber to which the anchor cable could be made fast, and here Paul decided to run the towing line, belaying it at the stern in such manner that it would hold steady.

Five minutes later Zenas was on board with Paul, making arrangements for the task before them, and from the deck of the *Nera* Mr. Sawtelle gave advice now and then, although it soon became apparent that Cushing was better skilled in such work than the owner of the yacht.

When everything was in readiness Paul sent his craft ahead slowly until the slack of the line could be taken up, and then came two or three anxious moments before headway was gained on the disabled yacht, for it was a grave question as to how much the Hampton boat might be able to do.

"Now she's got her!" Zenas cried triumphantly as the small boat forged slowly ahead, swinging the *Nera* around. "She'll do the trick in great shape, an' won't turn a hair! Talk about towin' with this 'ere craft! I've seen tugs twice or three times her size who wouldn't make as good a fist of it."

"She surely is doing well," Paul added as he alter-

nately glanced astern, and then at the motor to make certain it was working properly. "I believe you were right in saying that we could tow the yacht more easily than we could Captain Tobi's sloop."

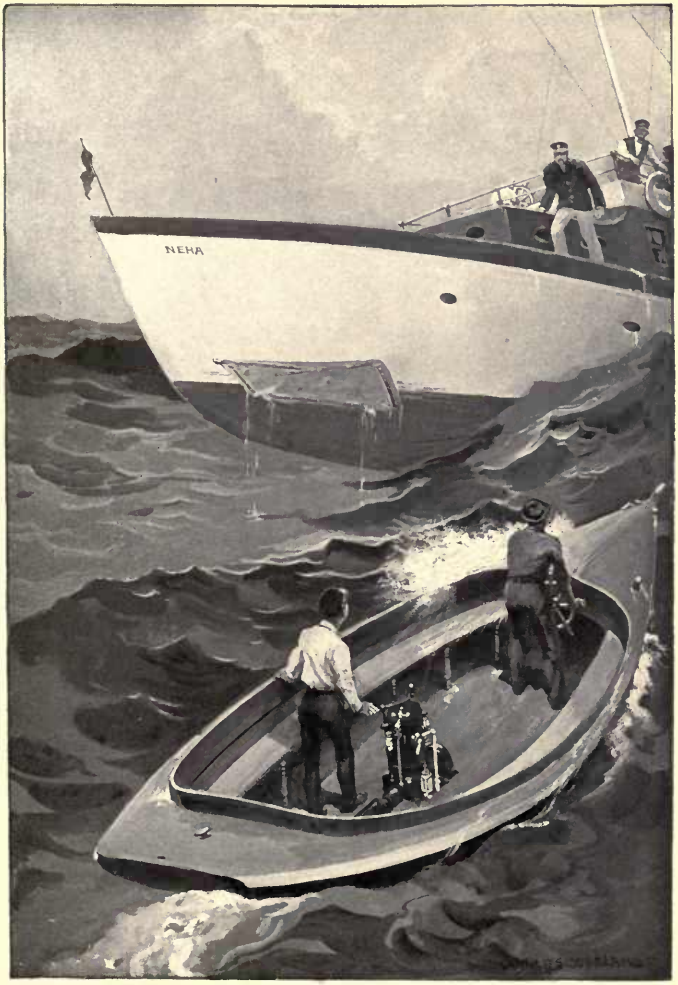
"I'm sure of it," Zenas shouted in glee. "We'll have that dandy little craft in the cove by sunrise, an' then I allow it won't be sich a terrible job, with the crew of the *Nera* to lend a hand, to bottle John Ed Bingham up so's he can't spin another thread against Silver Fox Farm."

Paul was not so confident that the run would be a short one; he realized that at any moment matters might become so complicated that it would be impossible to reach Barren island for a long time, and, perhaps, without having accomplished the purpose for which they were then working.

An accident to the motor; the fouling of the hawser with the Hampton boat's screw; a sudden and unfavorable change of weather—any or all of these might work an injury that could not speedily be repaired, and in the meanwhile Mr. Simpson would be alone among enemies, with more than a possibility that the venture of raising silver foxes would be wrecked.

Because of these fears which crowded into Paul's mind despite all his efforts to put them far from him, the lad was unusually careful with the motor, oiling here and cooling there, as he kept a jealous eye on the snake-like towing line that alternately sank beneath the surface, and again raised high in the air with the water streaming from its entire length.

"We're doing better than three miles an hour,"



"AHOY! ARE YOU THE PEOPLE WE TALKED WITH BY WIRELESS?"

Zenas said in a tone of satisfaction after thirty minutes had passed, and the gallant little boat was ploughing her way steadily onward dragging the larger craft behind her. "I'm wonderin' how they're gettin' on aboard the yacht. The power pumps have been workin' reg'lar, an' within the past ten minutes I've noticed what seems to be a couple of hand pumps on deck well for'ard."

"It may be that the strain we put on her is dragging the bow under, as Mr. Sawtelle was afraid might be the case," Paul suggested, but his companion replied confidently:

"I don't allow it's anythin' of the kind that's troublin' 'em. Most likely the leak at the stern is opened a bit wider since she began to move through the water. It would be a big pity to lose her now, when we've proved that this 'ere craft can snake her along in great shape."

"Do you mean that she might sink?" Paul asked, thus suddenly learning of a fresh cause for anxiety.

"Of course that is what will happen if they can't keep the water down. It's odd that we forgot to make some plan about givin' signals. With the yacht's engine out of commission they can't sound the whistle, an' things might go all at sixes an' sevens without our knowin' there was any trouble."

"Don't, Zenas, don't," the lad cried nervously. "What with thinking of all that may be happening to father at this very moment, and the chances of our motor's breaking down, I can't bear much more in the way of worry."

"Give over fussin', an' take things as they come. That's the only way to get along smooth-like in this world. You can keep yourself all haired up over this or that without changin' it the least little bit. It's way off the best plan to trust the present without strainin' yourself to look ahead after what might possibly happen."

Then Zenas began whistling vigorously, and Paul cried with no slight show of temper because of his anxiety:

"Of course I don't pin my faith on signs; but every sailor knows that a wind may be raised by whistling for it, and it wouldn't take much of a breeze to put an end to our job of towing."

"All right, lad," was the cheery reply. "I'll take to smokin', an' then my mouth will be too busy to get me into mischief. But all the same, we're gettin' along famously, an' are bound to see Barren island before daylight."

"Can you hold your course in the dark?"

"I'd almost agree to do it with my eyes shut; but after sunset, when the stars are shinin', is the very easiest time for steerin'. It's a big pity we didn't have a lantern aboard so's you could keep watch of the motor."

"I don't need one," was the curt reply, and during the hour which followed not a word was spoken aboard the Hampton boat.

Then it was that Zenas broke the silence by saying half to himself:

"It took us nigh to four hours comin' out, an' at the

speed we're makin', the island should be well under our bow by day-break. We'll have to haul in considerable slack of the hawser before beginnin' to swing 'round the point."

"There's little need to make arrangements for anything of that kind when we're not more than half-way on the run," Paul replied grimly.

There is no real need why any attempt be made to set down all that was said by the crew of the Hampton boat during that long night, when she forged steadily, though slowly, ahead, drawing after her the disabled yacht, and every turn of the screw brought Paul just so much nearer to his father, who might even at that moment be needing him sorely.

The lad watched the motor through all the hours of darkness as a cat watches a mouse, and at the helm stood Zenas, careful to hold the craft steadily on her course, until the darkness of night began to give way before the coming of a new day, and even while the gloom was yet so dense that Paul could not distinguish the outlines of the yacht, save by the lights she displayed, the helmsman shouted joyfully:

"There's that blessed Barren island! I never expected I'd be glad to see it; but it's lookin' mighty good jest now."

"I can't see anything," the lad said impatiently as he strove in vain to pierce the gloom with his eyes.

"Mighty nigh dead ahead it lays. Can't you see the loom of the land now? It looks somethin' like a cloud on the horizon."

"How do you know that is Barren island? We

may have left it far away on either bow, and be miles off our course."

"We might have done all that fool business; but we haven't," was the confident reply. "I ain't settin' myself up for much of a sailorman; but when I can't hold a course on a clear night like this has been, I'll hug the land mighty close. Watch out now, an' you'll see Silver Fox Farm begin to loom up good an' big."

There was little need to urge this last. Save when he was busied about the motor Paul never took his eyes from the dark shadow seemingly so far away on the horizon, and as the light grew stronger he had the satisfaction of seeing the island rise out of the sea, as it were, until he could plainly distinguish the general outlines.

"We should be there in three hours," he said half to himself, and Zenas added stoutly:

"Call it two, an' you'll be nearer the truth. We can't be more'n three miles away. Hello! Don't that look like a fore-an'-aft schooner jest beyond the point?"

"That's what it is!" Paul cried excitedly. "It must be the craft Bingham was expecting. She don't seem to have much way on."

"Only driftin' 'round. This 'ere breeze ain't strong enough to give her much more'n steerage way, an' unless somethin' begins to hum mighty soon, we'll be inter the cove ahead of her."

"If it really *is* the schooner, then we know to a certainty that nothing can have gone wrong with father, for it isn't reasonable to suppose John Ed would at-

tempt any serious mischief until the remainder of his gang were with him."

"I'll walk ashore this very minute if yonder schooner ain't the craft that landed the old smuggler! There wasn't sich a dreadful good chance to see her that night; but I had time to get her general trim pretty well in mind."

"If it is she, they are bold to stand in toward the island in the day-time."

"They can't help themselves, lad," Zenas cried with his peculiar purring laugh. "Seein's there ain't any wind to speak of, an' that headin' her if she should try to sneak back to the mainland, what else can she do but keep on driftin'? It's all comin' our way, Paul Simpson," and now Zenas showed signs of excitement. "We'll be inter the cove ahead of that pirate, an' when he stands in to-night to take off John Ed, we'll have men enough at our backs to give the whole crowd the surprise of their lives!"

CHAPTER XV

THE SCHOONER

Now for the first time did Paul feel proud because of what he and Zenas had done during the twenty-four hours just passed. Until this moment he had been so anxious concerning his father's safety that there was no room in his mind for anything else. When, however, it appeared certain that the schooner John Ed Bingham was expecting would come to take off him and his friend, had not as yet succeeded in reaching the island, there could be little doubt but that Mr. Simpson had been unmolested.

That he had received a wireless message from far out to sea, and answered it so successfully, was a matter in which Paul might justly take pride, and more particularly so since it was probable he had been the means of saving human life.

"We haven't done a bad job," he said in a tone of satisfaction, after having convinced himself that the schooner to be seen to windward was the same craft which had been under repairs at Seaview.

"Jest found that out, eh?" Zenas asked with a purring laugh. "Why, lad, the very same thing has been in my mind ever since we took this 'ere hawser aboard. I don't allow that I'm very well posted on what you call wireless telegraphy; but when I know that a couple of boys have rigged up what'll bring a message across the sea from them who are in distress, likely to go to

the bottom at any minute, I say to myself that it's a big thing. Then, when you an' I can run out on account of that same message, not callin' ourselves sailormen, an' pick up the disabled yacht same's if we was walkin' across a pasture, I reckon it's another big thing. Add to all that this towin' a craft like the *Nera* with a Hampton boat, forty miles or more, an' if we ain't got the right to throw our chests way out I don't know who has."

"Father will be pleased," Paul said as if speaking to himself, and Zenas added emphatically:

"Pleased? That won't be any name for it! He ought'er say to himself that even if Silver Fox Farm goes to everlastin' smash, he's made a big haul jest by findin' out he's got a son who can get up an' get same's you've been doin' since this fox business was started."

"Now you are laying it on so thick that I'll be stiff-necked with pride," Paul replied, his face flushing with pleasure even though he was not inclined to admit that all the praise was warranted.

"An' you've got a good right to be, same's Ned Bartlett has. If you two hadn't been foolin' 'round with that 'ere wireless contrivance last spring, an' had brains enough to know how to run the thing, the silver fox scheme would have gone to smash four days ago, an' this very minute that dandy little yacht would be driftin' 'round outside threatenin' to drown all hands on board. Stiff-necked! Why you couldn't be blamed if you didn't look at us ordinary folks agin."

"There! The schooner is standing about!" Paul

cried suddenly as he pointed to windward, and Zenas looked around with the air of a weather prophet, as he cried exultantly:

"Say, we didn't get here any too soon, lad. The wind is freshenin' mighty fast. Look at them clouds that have begun to gather since sunrise. We're goin' to have all the breeze that'll be needed 'twixt now an' night. What would them as are on board the *Nera* be thinkin' about if she was driftin' 'round same as when we found her, while the sea is beginnin' to get lumpy? Even as it is, they'll have to work the pumps mighty lively to keep the water down."

"But the schooner?"

"Ay, the comin' of the breeze is luck for her, 'cause now she can run down out'er sight to wait till dark, when I'm allowin' we'll make them as are on board dance a tune that won't be to their likin', if so be they try to lend John Ed a hand."

An hour later the Hampton boat, with the *Nera* towing astern, had come so near Barren island that Zenas was making a long circle in order to fetch the entrance of the cove without running any risk of swinging the yacht ashore on the point, and Paul was taking in the slack of the hawser to shorten it.

On the island near the wireless station could be seen a group of four gazing earnestly at the on-coming craft, and Paul knew full well that it was made up of his father, Mr. Downs and the two boys.

"I wonder what Sam and Ernest will have to say against that 'contraption' of mine, now that they must understand I did really get a message 'on air'?" Paul

said gleefully, and Zenas cried with a gurgle of delight:

"It'll make 'em sit up an' take notice, I reckon! An' it ain't all the surprise we'll give 'em 'twixt now an' the time we get this 'ere fox farm runnin' in good shape. They'll find out that what your father says is bound to go, an' John Ed Bingham ain't in it for a little bit, no matter how much he blusters."

The crew of the yacht, seeing that Paul would shorten the towing line, hauled in on it with a will, until, before Zenas had swung the Hampton boat around sufficiently, the *Nera* was not more than thirty feet astern.

"You have done a good job, lad," Mr. Sawtelle shouted from the bow of his yacht. "You are deserving of even more praise for having put up a wireless station that was effective, than for the work of towing. Take it all in all, and I am of the belief that we owe you our lives, for by this time, because of the wind having come up so rapidly, the *Nera* couldn't have remained afloat an hour. Even as it is, we have been forced to use hand pumps in order to save her from foundering."

"I'm mighty glad we're here," Paul replied, "and the greater portion of the credit is due to this Hampton boat. Hasn't she worked like a lady?"

"Indeed she has, my boy, and you have good reason to be proud of her."

Then Zenas gave the word for the crew of the *Nera* to stand by ready for mooring, and he swung the helm hard up, thus allowing the larger craft to glide for-

ward from the momentum already given, until two minutes later when she was well up the cove, but still in deep water, he shouted:

"Let go your anchor!" and the task of life-saving and wrecking was come to a successful end.

Paul decided that it would be better to lay the Hampton boat alongside the *Nera,* in case she might be needed suddenly. Then, after Mr. Sawtelle had said he would go on shore as soon as practicable, the lad and Zenas landed in the yacht's tender, met at the water's edge by Mr. Simpson, Mr. Downs, Sam and Ernest.

Paul's father clasped him in his arms immediately he stepped on the beach, kissing the lad on both cheeks, after which he said in a tone which brought a deep flush of pride to Paul's cheeks and a flood of affection to his heart:

"*My* son!"

"I'm mighty glad to be back and know that nothing has gone wrong with you," Paul said heartily as he returned his father's fervent embrace. "I have worried all the time for fear the schooner would put in while we were away, and Mr. Bingham be able to do as he pleased."

"We haven't seen the men since you went away. They have not shown themselves at the farm-house for food; but it isn't probable either has suffered from hunger, for this morning I saw where they had built a fire and roasted lobsters."

"Who gave them the lobsters?" Paul asked suspiciously as he glanced toward the farmer, and his father replied quickly:

"There has been no treachery, my son. It would be a simple matter for them to catch lobsters at low water by poking with sticks around the rocks. I have spent the greater portion of my time at Mr. Downs's house, therefore know beyond the possibility of a doubt that matters have gone as I would have them."

"Do you believe Bingham has been able to do any harm to the foxes?"

"It is possible, but not very probable. I spent two hours or more yesterday, after you left, walking in the vicinity of the timbered land, and the men couldn't have moved about very much without showing themselves. I cannot believe any very great harm has been done as yet."

Then Mr. Simpson half turned as if to go toward the farm-house, and Mr. Downs, who had been shaking Zenas vigorously by the hand, evidently congratulating him upon what had been done, came forward as he said to Paul:

"After this, lad, nobody shall laugh at that 'ere wireless contraption of yours while I'm 'round, an' yet I never would have believed words could be sent on the air in such a way that they'd stop at your bird cage. It's the most wonderful thing I ever heard tell about. I declare to goodness if it don't even beat raisin' silver foxes by hand."

"How did the people on that steamer happen to know just where to send you word that she was disabled?" Sam asked, without venturing to indulge in that grin which had been so annoying to Paul.

"You had better let me explain the working of the wireless some time when both of us have an idle hour, and once you've got the idea in mind, the thing will seem very simple."

"But how did they know you had the contraption here on this island?" Sam persisted, and Paul replied with a laugh:

"They didn't know it. A person trying to send a message on air, as you call it, causes, by aid of his telegraph key, certain vibrations in the atmosphere, which, radiating in one direction, may be caught up by any station within a certain radius. Perhaps you will understand it better by thinking of a small pond of water, into the middle of which a rock has been thrown, when ripples come up on the surface, growing larger and larger until either reaching the shore, or dying away, according to the power given to the rock. So it is in the air: the wave sounds come up, and they might be caught by a dozen stations, if there were so many within the working power of the apparatus from which the message was sent."

Sam scratched his head in perplexity; Ernest stood open-mouthed as if he would absorb the information through his throat; but neither of the boys ventured to cast discredit upon Paul's "contraption." Like their father, they had come to realize that the "bird cage" suspended between the two spars near the head of Swallow-Tailed cove was the result of a marvellous discovery, the proof of which was the presence of the *Nera* in the harbor.

"What's the matter with the steamer?" Mr. Downs

asked, and Zenas took it upon himself to explain, saying in conclusion:

"She will have to lay here till Paul can send a message to Ned, an' get him to telegraph overland for a tug from Portland. Meanwhile 'cordin' to my way of thinkin', Mr. Sawtelle can do better than keep the pumps goin'. If I was in his place, I'd build a raft around her, with hawsers running under her keel, an' then she might lay here all summer without danger of sinking."

"Where would you get timbers for the raft?" Ernest asked curiously.

"I'd hire your father to get 'em, if so be Mr. Simpson allowed it could be done without disturbin' the foxes. So you haven't seen hide nor hair of John Ed, eh?"

"He won't dare to show himself while Mr. Simpson stays 'round the house, an' we boys haven't left the place since you went away, so's to prove that we don't have any truck with him."

"It's a good scheme to let Paul's father have all the proof he's needin' that you're playin' square." Zenas said dryly, and he would have followed Mr. Simpson and Paul, who were evidently intending to go to the wireless station, but that Mr. Sawtelle hailed from the deck of the yacht:

"Ahoy! The *Nera* is not so much of a wreck that we can't serve meals, and breakfast is just being put on the table. Ask Master Simpson, his father, and Zenas to come aboard and take pot luck with us."

It is needless to say that the invitation was accepted without hesitation, and during the meal many plans were laid, not only regarding the safety of the yacht, but for the furtherance of the silver fox scheme.

Mr. Sawtelle would have spoken at considerable length regarding the amount of salvage which should be paid to Paul and Zenas, for, as he stated, there was no question but that the yacht would have foundered, possibly carrying down with her some of the crew, if it had not been for the timely arrival of the Hampton boat.

But to this proposition Mr. Simpson would not listen, stating that it was not the intention either of himself or his son to set a money value upon the services rendered; it was enough that they had been able to succor those who were in distress, and in the satisfaction of so doing, he declared that Paul and Zenas would find a greater reward than could be had through the medium of money.

"Very well," said the owner of the *Nera,* interrupting Mr. Brownson when he would have made a protest against Mr. Simpson's decision. "We are likely to lay here some time, and there will be ample opportunity to consider how we may discharge the debt of gratitude which is due."

Then he discussed with Paul's father as to how the *Nera* could best be gotten into Portland, and during the conversation Zenas took considerable part, offering advice which the gentlemen believed to be valuable. His proposition was that several days might, and probably must, elapse before a tug could be summoned, and

in the meantime he advised building a raft around the yacht, as he had already suggested to Mr. Downs.

The result of this was that the owner of the *Nera* left the matter entirely to his discretion, agreeing to pay whatsoever in the way of wages might be demanded for the services of Mr. Downs and his sons, and Zenas hurriedly finished his breakfast in order to set about the task without delay, for all this while it had been necessary for every member of the crew to work industriously at the pumps.

It was also agreed before the meal had come to an end that, in case Mr. Simpson should need the services of any or all of those who had been rescued, in the guarding of his farm, he might feel at liberty to call upon them either by day or by night.

Although the matter was not stated in so many words, it was generally understood that strict watch be kept from that moment on different parts of the island to guard against the escape of John Ed Bingham and his friend, which it seemed probable, in view of the fact that the fore-and-aft schooner had been seen, would be attempted that very night.

It was also agreed that during such time as the *Nera* remained in the cove, Mr. Simpson, Paul, and Zenas should take their meals on board her, for, as her owner said, while she was much the same as a wreck the larder remained well filled, and her cook was competent to prepare the provisions in a most approved manner.

When all these matters had been decided upon, and the breakfast, which was more in the nature of a din-

ner, had come to an end, Paul and Mr. Sawtelle went to the wireless station in the hope of being able to communicate with Ned, for it was now nearly noon, and instruct him to send such telegraphic messages as might be required in order to summon a tug.

Mr. Simpson went on guard at the farm-house once more. Zenas had already impressed Mr. Downs and his sons into service. The four were hewing timbers from the small thicket immediately to the eastward of the dwelling, where was no danger the foxes might be disturbed, and the crew of the yacht continued their task of pumping out the sea water which was coming in so rapidly through the shaft-box.

Mr. Sawtelle was, as might be understood from his having an apparatus on board the *Nera,* a student in the art of wireless telegraphy, or radiotelegraphy, as the scientists term it, and again was Paul's pride aroused when the gentleman praised him in no measured terms on the results of his work.

"I thought I was pretty well advanced in this business; but I find that you lads have gone ahead of me," he said as he examined each portion of the apparatus. "Let me see you work it."

"I suppose you will think me awkward at using the key," the lad said modestly; "but I haven't had sufficient experience to be a rapid operator."

Then he opened the trunk, fixed the wires for the reception of waves, turned on the switch, adjusted the potential divider, and began sending out the call n—d.

The answering signal came almost immediately, followed by the question:

"Where have you been? Did Bingham get hold of you, or has the island drifted away?"

"I picked up a message from a disabled yacht twenty miles south-west of Matinicus," Paul replied. "Zenas and I went after her in the Hampton boat and towed her in."

"You towed a yacht to Barren island?" Ned asked, working the key so rapidly that Paul could well understand how excited he was by the startling information.

"That is true; she's here now. Her owner wants to hire a tug. Can you get Captain Tobi into the station?"

"Where is Bingham?"

"Somewhere on the island. We'll catch him to-night. Can you get Captain Thompson?"

"I'll have him in about ten minutes. Will you wait there?"

"Yes," came the reply, and the conversation was at an end for the time being.

"Who is this Captain Tobi, and Captain Thompson?" Mr. Sawtelle asked curiously.

"One and the same person, sir," Paul replied laughingly. "An old sea captain who will understand how your business ought to be done, and, if you choose, can attend to it for you."

Then, to occupy the time while they were waiting, the owner of the *Nera* discussed with Paul as to how he might by a trifling outlay increase the power of his station, and suggested so many improvements and conveniences in and around the shanty, that it was to the lad almost as if his arrangements for radiotelegraph-

ing had suddenly fallen far below the standard he and Ned originally designed.

"Before the *Nera* is able to leave this vicinity you and I will make big improvements here," Mr. Sawtelle said cheerily. "I have a quantity of material on board, and it is all at your service, for boys who can accomplish what you and your friend have, should be supplied with whatever may be needed for a long distance station. Then some day, after you can call yourself an expert at the business, I'll come down here and we'll build a flying machine. This would be an ideal spot for work of that kind."

"I shan't attempt anything quite so scientific as that," Paul said laughingly. "It is an easy matter to build a wireless, with all the information a fellow can get out of books; but he deserves to break his neck as well as his legs if he tries that which is beyond him."

"But it isn't beyond you, my boy, and you can get as much concerning air-ships from books, as you did regarding radiotelegraphy. But we will talk about that another time."

Within ten minutes Ned announced that Captain Thompson was in the Seaview station, when Mr. Sawtelle himself took the telegraph key, and during nearly an hour he and Ned flashed back and forth questions and answers until matters regarding the *Nera* were as nearly settled as they could be from a distance.

"I suppose you have heard all I said?" Mr. Sawtelle asked, turning to Paul, and the latter replied as if almost ashamed to admit the fact:

"You sent so much more rapidly than I that I couldn't follow more than half. As I understood it, you have hired Captain Thompson to engage a tug and bring her here. He believes the *Nera* can be repaired at Seaview as well as at Portland."

"That is exactly it; but as to the last question I am undecided."

"There's a good shipyard at Seaview, and if you should go there the Hampton boat could tow the yacht over, providing we waited for a fair day."

"I never thought of that possibility," and Mr. Sawtelle started to his feet with some considerable show of excitement. "It is well worth considering, and I will talk it over with Lumley and Brownson."

He left the station hurriedly, and at the same moment Ned called the island.

"Who has been sending the messages?" was the question which Paul read.

"The owner of the yacht we towed in."

"Say, he can handle the key all right. It kept me humping to make sense out of it. What kind of an apparatus has he on board the yacht?"

"I haven't seen it, but shall before he leaves. If you could only come here now while the *Nera* is in the cove."

"That's what I'm counting on. Would you and Zenas come after me?"

"Say the word, and we'll be there."

Then the conversation was brought to a close, and leaving his instruments without fear of harm coming to them now that the Downs boys and their father had

been brought into subjection, as it were, Paul went over to the farm-house.

"What about John Ed Bingham now?" the lad asked triumphantly, when he was come to where his father was sitting in the door of the dwelling with his eyes fixed upon that portion of the timbered land where it was believed the smuggler and his companion were in hiding.

"It was fortunate for Mr. Sawtelle that you were able to go to his relief, and, as I look at the matter, still more fortunate for Silver Fox Farm that you towed the yacht here, because now we have helpers enough to prevent the old smuggler from making his escape, no matter how many may come in the schooner to aid him."

"Do you believe he will attempt to leave the island while so many are here?"

"Not knowing how long a stay the yacht may make, I fancy he will be all the more eager to get away, fearing lest we hunt him out. Besides, it is not probable he will be satisfied with a diet of roasted lobsters many days. It is certain that the schooner, when she comes back, won't dare enter the cove while the *Nera* lays there. Daniel Downs, who has just come up from the shore, reports that he can make her out, seemingly hove to down to the westward. She will haul in here before midnight, unless I am greatly mistaken."

"What do you intend to do, sir?" Paul asked curiously, and his father replied:

"I haven't been able to decide the matter as yet. If it were not that I must make an example of Bingham,

so others may be deterred from molesting the foxes, I would allow the old scoundrel to escape. But if he should go free after what has been done, I shall have no assurance that he won't try the same game over again. Certain it is that other men who are equally dishonest would think it safe to follow his example."

"Then you count on having him arrested, sir?"

"It is what must be done for the good of Silver Fox Farm, and the question is, how it can be effected? I am afraid starving them out will be too long a process, and I'm opposed to sending any force through the woods in pursuit of the men, because of disturbing the animals."

"The longer they stay in hiding the greater chance that they will come upon some of the foxes."

It was to Paul very much as if his father preferred to be alone while settling this question in his mind, and he left him, going to the cove where Mr. Downs, with the steers, was hauling timbers which had been cut by his sons and Cushing.

Before sunset Zenas had proven that he was capable of caring for a craft in the condition of the *Nera,* and the crew of the yacht were decidedly convinced of his ability because there was no longer any necessity for keeping the hand-pumps going.

By rafting the timbers just hewn, under the stern of the little craft, he had raised it so far above the surface of the water that the sea no longer found entrance through the shaft-box, while at the same time, acting upon his instructions, the seamen had patched the bow,

paying it well with cold tar, until it was nearly water-tight.

"I don't allow I've done everythin' Bristol fashion," he said in reply to a complimentary remark from Paul, as the two, in company with the Downs boys, stood on the shore gazing at the *Nera*. "It's all been done same's a barn-door carpenter would set about doing it; but I'm allowin' them 'ere sailors are thinkin' it couldn't be fixed better, 'cause they don't like to work the pumps any too well. She'll lay there snug as a bug till the tow-boat comes for her, an' to-morrow I believe we can put a patch over that tail-shaft in such a way as will stop a good part of the leak."

"Then you have given up farming silver foxes to turn ship carpenter, eh?" Sam asked with the grin which was so disagreeable to Paul.

"I'm what you might call a jack-at-all-trades, without bein' very good for anythin' in particular. But I'm countin' on showin' my hand at catchin' a smuggler this night."

"Meaning John Ed, eh?" Ernest asked with a note of anxiety in his voice.

"That's just who I am meanin'."

"But he won't try to get away from here while there are so many folks 'round," and now Ernest spoke in a confident tone, whereupon Zenas cried sharply, pointing to the westward:

"Then why is that 'ere schooner creepin' up here? Them as are on board of her must think we're blind, if we don't know what she's about. After she drifted within plain sight this morning, it was their business

to keep away three or four days, till we'd given over looking for 'em; but now the fools are comin' right on bold as lions, allowin' we're asleep."

"They can't come ashore without our knowin' it," Ernest suggested, and it seemed as if this remark gave Zenas a happy thought.

Motioning for Paul to follow him, he started off in the direction of the shanty, and when the two had left the Downs boys so far in the rear that they could not by any possibility overhear the conversation, he said:

"Look here, lad, I've got a plan which if it don't work won't do any harm. We're goin' aboard the yacht for supper 'twixt now an' sunset, most likely. Now s'posen when it grows dark, that instead of comin' ashore agin, we slip inter the Hampton boat an' run down to westward till we pick up that 'ere schooner? Seein's how our craft sets so low in the water I'm allowin' we might get close on them villains without their knowin' it."

"And then what?" Paul asked in perplexity, not yet understanding Zenas's plan.

"Then we'll follow her, an' I'm reckonin' we'll dare to run as near the shore as that schooner will, seein's we don't draw a quarter-part so much water."

"Well?"

"Wa'al, that's the end of it. It'll be a case of our cuttin' out the boat that puts ashore, an' if so be your father's agreeable, you an' I can work the whole traverse. I ain't sayin' as we can lay hands on John Ed; but we'll catch them as come to help him, an' without their cronies on the schooner bein' any the wiser."

"But we can't cruise around making prisoners of every one who tries to land on Barren island."

"I allow your father will look at the thing in a different light. If we get hold of them as put ashore from the schooner, he can send 'em over to Seaview in the Hampton boat on a charge of trespassing, an' in the meanwhile we'll have muddled John Ed an' his friends to beat the band."

CHAPTER XVI

A MISCALCULATION

Not until after Zenas had gone into all the details of his plan was Paul convinced that it had in it any elements of success, and even when he felt most hopeful, the possibilities of failure seemed greater than those of success.

Put into the fewest words, the scheme which Zenas believed could not by any chance go awry, was that the two run out in the Hampton boat after night had come, searching for the schooner. As a matter of course, if those on board the vessel discovered their whereabouts, the plan would be a failure, save in so far that they would be able to ascertain without much exertion where a landing might be attempted.

Zenas felt certain, however, that he could come within view of the schooner and yet remain unseen by those on board, in which case he would follow cautiously until a boat should be sent off to open communication with John Ed Bingham.

It was necessary for the success of this scheme that the vessel approach the land at some point where the shore would not permit of her running in very close, and Zenas felt confident such might be the case, because the fact that the disabled yacht was in the cove would prevent any attempt at a landing in that vicinity.

"They are bound to strike the southerly point of the island for more reasons than one," he said while

arguing the matter with Paul in the seclusion of the shanty. "The first reason is 'cause John Ed is at that end, an' can't well get anywhere else on account of our havin' so many to stand watch. Then agin, the schooner wouldn't go to Swallow-Tailed cove, even if the old smuggler could get there, on account of not bein' able to send a small boat ashore after the tide had ebbed a couple of hours, or within that same time of its bein' high water. So you see, lad, it is the same as a dead sure thing they'll try the southerly point."

"What then?"

"Why the rest is as easy as rollin' off a log. The schooner won't be able to come within half a mile of the shore, an' the night promises to be so black that them as are left on board will lose sight of their boat before she's a hundred yards away. I'll agree to put our craft in anywhere among the rocks that they can run a dory, an' the minute the scoundrels have made a landin' we'll snake their boat off, leavin' 'em prisoners, providin' we ain't lucky enough to cut the craft out completely, towin' her, with all aboard, inter the cove."

"And what do you fancy the men will be doing while we are towing them along?"

"It may be they'll show fight; but I count on havin' a boat-hook handy, an' if I can't keep three or four of 'em quiet it'll be time for me to lay down."

"I'm ready to try it," Paul said after a brief pause; "but it seems to me that we're taking big chances of getting the worst of it."

"If you're afraid, of course that settles the whole business, unless I can get one of the *Nera's* crew to

go with me," Zenas replied in a tone which nettled the lad decidedly, and he cried sharply:

"Don't think that I'm afraid of what they may be able to do. If father is willing for us to make the venture I shall go with you."

"Then the business is settled. Let's find your father now, 'cause I've got considerable to do in the way of makin' the Hampton boat ready before we can start."

It was not a difficult matter to have private speech with Mr. Simpson, and when Zenas had outlined the scheme to him he said with a smile:

"It appears to me that you are counting unhatched chickens, for unless those on the schooner move exactly in accordance with your desires, the plan must fall through. So far as concerns your running out to pick up the vessel with the idea of learning at which point she will try to come into touch with Bingham, I heartily approve of it, and advise that you do not attempt anything more, because of the danger that you may have made a miscalculation in your plans."

This permission, although not so hearty as Paul could have wished, appeared to satisfy Zenas. On the instant he set off for the cove to make his arrangements, and Mr. Simpson was at that moment joined by Mr. Sawtelle, who held him in private conversation so long that Paul could do no less than leave them alone.

The lad would have gone directly to the station to put the apparatus in order for the night, after exchanging a few messages with Ned; but the Downs

boys prevented him, unless he was willing to take them into the shanty.

Both Sam and Ernest appeared to be laboring under considerable excitement, which Paul decided must be caused by the presence of so many strangers on the island, or because John Ed Bingham was in danger of being made prisoner, and this last seemed the more probable.

The boys were eager to learn if Paul had received any late messages from Seaview; if he was intending to send any; how long the *Nera* was likely to remain in the cove, and if her crew would do all they might toward assisting Mr. Simpson in the capture of Bingham.

"One would suppose, after all that has happened, you would be glad to know we stand a good chance of bringing John Ed up with a round turn," Paul said in a tone of suspicion, and Sam made haste to declare:

"Of course we would; but it stands to reason that we're kind'er curious to know what's goin' on. If you don't want to tell us, we won't bother, but it does seem as if there was no need of keepin' us in the dark after your father believes that we're standin' right behind him, ready to do whatever he wants of us."

"I'm not keeping you in the dark," and Paul began to be ashamed of his suspicions. "I do not know anything more than you concerning father's plans for the night. To the best of my belief he hasn't yet decided what is to be done, except that Bingham must be made prisoner."

"It don't seem as if you could put a man in jail jest

'cause he stepped foot on Barren island," Ernest muttered, and Paul seemed to think it necessary his father's position be defined.

"I don't know if that can be done; but surely the law may deal with him for coming here as he has done. Hiding in your house and then in the woods is proof that he's trying to do some mischief to the foxes. But the first thing will be to make charges against him for attempting to kill Zenas, and when that has been proven I'm allowing he won't trouble Silver Fox Farm for some time to come."

It seemed much as if the Downs boys had suddenly lost all desire for information, and one would have said they were seriously disturbed in mind because the man who had been the cause of so much trouble was in danger of answering for his misdeeds.

They turned abruptly away, going toward the farmhouse, and again Paul would have continued on to the shanty; but this time he was stopped by a signal from the *Nera* that supper was ready.

It was indeed a pleasure to partake of such a meal as Mr. Sawtelle served to his guests. The yacht had been provisioned in the most generous manner, and, as Zenas said more than once, "the cook laid himself out to show in what way grub could be juggled when a fellow knew how to do it."

On this evening Zenas did not linger at the table as he had at noon, when he seemingly grieved because of leaving the hospitable board even after it was impossible for him to eat anything more. He ate rapidly, urging Paul to do the same, and when their hunger had

been appeased he led the way on deck, saying as they gained the open air:

"I allow we're ready for the cruise, an' the sooner it's begun the better, seein's we're bound to run slow till havin' picked up the schooner. There's no knowin' how much time we've got, an' it won't do to muddle this thing jest because of laziness."

Paul went over the rail into the Hampton boat by way of answer, and five minutes later the little craft was gliding slowly out of the cove like a phantom in the darkness.

Although it was not possible the schooner could be in the vicinity sufficiently near for their conversation to be overheard even though it had been carried on in an ordinary tone, Zenas spoke only in whispers when Paul came to his side, and stood like a statue at the wheel straining his eyes into the gloom in search of the enemy.

"I allow there's no need of our doin' much tongue waggin' now, 'cause we understand what's to be done. All I ask is that you follow me when the time comes right. Keep an eye out for the schooner, an' if you pick her up before I do, slow the motor down."

Paul, who in his nervous excitement had gone forward to be near Zenas, now returned to his station in front of the motor, and in the most perfect silence, save for the soft chug-chug-chug of the machinery, which was deadened by the wash of the waves and the whispering of the night wind, the search for the schooner was continued.

How many moments passed before the quest was at

an end, Paul could not have said. The suspense and excitement were so great that he had no idea as to the passage of time, but strove to soothe himself by counting the revolutions of the screw.

Then came the moment when Zenas stepped back a couple of paces and waved his hand energetically, which Paul interpreted to mean that the motor was to be stopped, and after this had been done the lad went noiselessly to the helmsman's side.

Without speaking Zenas pointed over the starboard bow, and after ten seconds or more Paul succeeded in making out the dim outlines of a schooner's spars, so misty and vague that a less sharp-sighted man than the one who stood at the wheel would have failed to see the slightest semblance to a vessel.

During five minutes the Hampton boat lay motionless on the water, save as she rose and fell on the waves, and then it was possible to see that the ghostly craft was moving at right angles with the course the searchers had been pursuing.

Paul understood that Mr. Bingham's friends were steering for the southerly point of the island, exactly as Zenas claimed would be their course, and for the first time since casting off from the *Nera* did the lad have hope their venture might be a success. If the first portion of the programme was being carried out as Cushing believed, why might not the remainder follow in such a manner that the small boat, perhaps John Ed himself, be captured?

Not until the shadowy spars were nearly lost to view in the distance did Zenas motion for his com-

panion to start the motor again, and then the Hampton boat crept slowly on after her intended prey with no more of noise than might have been made by a school of playful fish.

An hour later and the pursuers were come so near the island that the loom of the land could be made out in the distance, and the roaring of the surf against the rocky coast sounded in their ears with startling distinctness.

Then it was that Zenas stepped back from the wheel to whisper cautiously:

"Now send her ahead at the best speed; but be ready to slow down when I wave my hand."

The Hampton boat was swung around on a wide circle, passing entirely beyond view of the schooner's spars, to come up close within the line of surf at that point where the reef extended farthest to the south.

Once more it was possible for Paul to get a glimpse of the shadowy spars, and as Zenas gave the signal to stop the motor, the lad could hear the thud of oars in their row-locks.

Again was the programme being carried out exactly in accordance with Zenas's figuring. The Hampton boat was within a short distance of a dory which was proceeding from the schooner to the shore in search of John Ed and his friend, and the time for action had arrived.

Zenas was as patient as a cat watching a mouse. He held the boat motionless while the men from the schooner, seemingly unaware that any one was watching their movements, pulled here and there seeking a

safe entrance amid the long lines of jagged rocks, and instantly they shot landward on the crest of a wave, he signalled for Paul to send the Hampton boat ahead.

It was dangerous work, putting the heavy craft into that narrow water-way, where the slightest deviation from the proper course would send her on the rocks where the surf must speedily wreck her; but the man at the helm was determined on capturing those who would do mischief to Silver Fox Farm, and prepared to take any chances in order to compass his purpose.

It was possible for Paul to see, even in the gloom, two men leap out of the dory as she was pulled skilfully into a narrow rift of the ledge, and it appeared to him that they carried long poles or clubs in their hands; but he had no time to scrutinize them very closely because whispered orders from Zenas were coming thick and fast.

It was "slow down," "send her ahead," "stop her," in rapid succession until the Hampton boat had followed the dory, and was lying with her bow alongside the smaller craft, protected from the swell by the reef on either side.

Verily those friends of John Ed Bingham's must have been exceedingly well acquainted with Barren island at all stages of the tide, for at no other time could this landing have been effected with any degree of safety.

"It'll take 'em quite a while to find John Ed, seein's how he couldn't have had any way of knowin' exactly where they'd come, an' we can do our work in good shape."

"You can't do more than steal the boat," Paul replied, and Zenas was so reckless as to indulge in a soft, purring laugh as he drew out from the boat's bow a large coil of thin line sufficiently strong to be used as a towing hawser for such a craft as the dory.

"There's enough of this 'ere so we can make fast an' then back off out'er sight till the villains are aboard, when we've got 'em foul."

"But they can easily cut the line."

"By the time they know what's happened I'll have 'em alongside so near that the boat-hook can be used as a persuader," Zenas replied as he went over the rail of the Hampton boat, Paul following his example according to instructions.

Because the dory was lying, as a matter of course, head on the shore, it was necessary the line should be made fast to her stern, for there was not sufficient room to turn the craft when the flight was begun, and Zenas performed this task with the utmost caution, after he had secured one end to the bow of the Hampton boat.

Thus far everything had worked exactly as Cushing planned it would, and at the very moment when both he and Paul felt confident of success, disaster came.

It was not probable the men on the schooner could have received warning of what was to be done, for they had held no communication with the island since the plan was made; but certain it is they could not have moved with more precision had the whole scheme been written down with the most minute detail.

Zenas had but just made the line fast, and was pull-

ing on it to make certain the bowline held securely, when Paul was conscious of a crashing blow on the head which seemingly caused sparks of fire to fly from his eyes. After that he had no knowledge of what was going on until he heard some person in the distance cry out:

"We'll keep on for the mainland. You can pick us up at Rocky ledge."

Dimly the lad wondered what might be the meaning of the words, and vainly he strove to understand what had occurred at the very moment when success seemed assured, until the touch of Zenas's hand upon his face restored him to full consciousness.

"What's going on?" he asked in a whisper, and Zenas replied grimly, as if amid disaster he could see something comical in the situation:

"I've made a bloomin' fool of myself by allowin' that those fellows wouldn't be on the lookout for us, that's all."

"Did they strike me on the head?"

"I reckon there ain't any doubt 'bout it, an' I got a clip that knocked me silly. 'Cordin' as I figger it, they took the oars ashore, an' then laid low till we'd done the work. It must have been that we were seen from the schooner, an' they were ready for us. I'm allowin' both of us were tumbled inter this 'ere dory, an' then John Ed's friends set about runnin' the business same as if it was their own scheme."

"Where are they carrying us?"

"To Rocky ledge, as nigh as I can make out from what that fellow said when we passed the schooner."

"But we can't go there!" Paul cried in alarm, and Zenas replied soothingly:

"I don't allow we can. It's only a matter of cuttin' the tow rope, an' then standin' by to defend ourselves in case they pick us up agin."

"Why don't you do it?" Paul screamed, regardless as to whether their captors might hear him.

"I'm waitin' till we get somewhere nigh the mouth of the cove; they are runnin' up the shore of the island, an' we may as well save ourselves all the work we can."

Then Zenas, taking a knife from his pocket, crept into the bow of the dory, watching meanwhile the conformation of the land, and when the Hampton boat was hauled around on a course which, if continued, would bring her to Seaview, he severed the line.

"There, that shuts us off from them, an' I'm hopin' your boat will pick up with her screw the line that's trailin' astern, so's to bring their pleasin' little excursion to a mighty sudden end."

"They have stolen the Hampton boat!" Paul cried as if he had but just become aware of the fact, and Zenas replied in a grim tone:

"I kind'er had a suspicion of that when we started an' I found as how's we'd had a pressin' invitation to change crafts."

"But how can they run her?"

"I'm allowin' there's some one aboard who is as well posted on motor boats as you. The fact is that John Ed has most likely got away, an' now we're bound to hunt for your boat as well as him; but don't get it

inter your mind that the old scoundrel is goin' to sneak out'er this scrape without considerable rufflin' of the hair. I've got nothin' else to do from now on but chase him, an' we'll have a settlement if I live long enough."

By this time Paul was sitting in the stern-sheets striving to make out by the shore line how near they were to the cove, and Zenas, having relieved his mind somewhat by swearing vengeance against Bingham, said in what he intended should be a cheery tone:

"My head is swimmin' worse'n it did after John Ed served me out over by the farm-house; but we've got to work the oars if we don't hanker after bein' carried off to sea."

Then he fumbled about in the bottom of the craft while one might have counted twenty, at the end of which time he cried with what was very like terror in his tones:

"There isn't an oar aboard this blessed craft. They took 'em ashore so's to have somethin' to knock us down with——"

"I saw that they had what looked like poles in their hands."

"There's no question but that they got sight of us 'bout the time we came across them—perhaps before, an' figgered the whole out the same's I did, only their reckonin' worked right an' mine went all wrong. Now what's to be done?"

"We can't make any great fist at rowing without oars," Paul replied bitterly, striving manfully to prevent any token of fear from sounding in his voice.

"An' what wind there is blows off shore from the island. 'Cordin' to all appearances we're likely to land at Seaview before seein' Barren island agin!"

The men in the Hampton boat had given no heed when the tow-line was cut, although it must have been apparent that there was no longer any drag on their craft, and after two or three minutes spent in silence Zenas said bitterly:

"They had the whole thing down mighty fine, an' didn't care whether we cut the line or not. I reckon the villains counted we'd do that same before findin' out that there were no oars aboard, an' was mighty glad to get rid of us. But I'll square accounts with John Ed——"

"What is the use of threatening, when you can't raise a finger?" Paul asked impatiently, and Zenas said with a mirthless laugh:

"Seein's how I can't do anythin' else, it ain't any great harm if I let off a little steam, allowin' it makes me feel a bit better. We're bound to drift 'round here till some craft picks us up, or we've come to the mainland, an' I reckon there'll be time enough on our hands to do a good bit of threatenin'."

Paul had held his courage as long as possible, and now that the situation was thus pictured in words he gave way, burying his face in his hands while mingled grief and terror found vent in violent sobs.

On the instant Zenas turned comforter, and, pulling the boy's head on to his own shoulder, he strove to soothe him much as a mother would a child.

"It isn't so bad but that it might be worse, lad.

We're adrift, with mighty little chance of bein' picked up before mornin', that I'll admit; but there's no sea on, an' we'll pull through in great shape if you'll only keep your upper lip stiff."

"I don't mean to play the baby," Paul said as he strove to repress his sobs; "but I'm thinking of how father will feel when we fail to come back, and he knows that some disaster has come to us. He'll believe matters are worse than really is the case."

"Your father isn't quite a fool!" Zenas said, speaking sharply in the hope of arousing the boy from his despair. "He'll know that John Ed an' his gang don't dare go very far in their mischief, on account of the law, an' it wouldn't surprise me a little bit if he guessed jest what has happened."

"Then he will believe we have been drowned!"

"Not a bit of it. He'll send word to Ned to have Captain Tobi put out his sloop to hunt us up——"

"How can he do that when I'm not there? He doesn't know anything about working the wireless."

"True for you; but Mr. Sawtelle can run the machine all right, an' he'll be talkin' with Ned Bartlett as soon as day comes. Say, when we picked up the *Nera* it wasn't in our minds that we were doin' ourselves a good turn, eh? S'posin' the owner of the yacht wasn't there? Then all that contraption would be useless, whereas it don't make the least little bit of difference because you're off here driftin' round in this 'ere dory for your health. Say, what about your old power boat? When we don't show up what's to hinder your father comin' out in her to hunt us up?"

"He doesn't know how to run the motor."

"What about Mr. Sawtelle's engineer? Don't you reckon he could handle a toy craft like her? Now stop tryin' to find trouble, lad. We're where we can't help ourselves, an' it's only makin' a bad matter worse to give way same's you're doin'. The night will go all the quicker if we don't get down to the heel, an' when mornin' comes it's almost the same as certain we'll be picked up by some fisherman, or by your father. He'll know in what direction the wind is takin' the dory, an' can steer for us as straight as we went for the *Nera.*"

Thus did Zenas comfort the sorrowing lad, striving to dispel his sorrow and his tears; but even while thus engaged the good fellow knew that danger menaced, against which nothing could be done by them. The wind might shift, sending them out to sea where, and he remembered many such cases, the dory would drift about until those on board had starved to death.

Meanwhile matters on the island were not favorable to the speedy sending out of a relief expedition in search of those who had been so neatly tricked by John Ed's friends.

Owing to the fact that the schooner remained hove to so far from the shore when a dory was sent in search of the old smuggler, those who were on the alert against John Ed's escape did not see her, therefore no one could say whether she had come up to the land or not.

All the crew of the *Nera,* including Mr. Sawtelle and his friends, took part in the guard duty. Mr. Downs

and his sons were stationed near Swallow-Tailed cove where there was little likelihood they could come in contact with the fugitives, and Mr. Simpson went to and fro, keeping all the watchers under his eye.

Thus it was he did not know that Paul and Zenas remained absent, until nearly sunrise, when he passed the word that it was useless longer to stand guard because there was no probability John Ed would make any attempt to leave the island after day had come.

Not until he was on board the yacht, having been summoned to partake of an early breakfast after the long night's vain work, did he ask for Paul, and would have sent to the shanty to see if he might be there, when Mr. Sawtelle pointed out the ominous fact that the Hampton boat was not in the cove.

It is needless to say that the greatest excitement prevailed immediately it was discovered that the two who had set off to capture the smuggler unaided were missing. Contrary to the supposition of Zenas, no one suspected the truth. It was believed that there had been foul play, and in a twinkling all hands were scouring the shore of the island fearing to find ominous evidence.

It was a full two hours after sunrise before Mr. Simpson was convinced that the solution to the mystery would not be found on Barren island, and the owner of the *Nera* suggested as a forlorn hope that word be sent to Seaview by the wireless.

"We'll give information that Paul and his companion are missing, on the chance that some word may be received there concerning them," Mr. Sawtelle said

in a hopeful tone. "Then we will send some of my men out in the power dory to search, and surely we shall come upon the poor fellows soon, for it isn't possible the smuggler or his friends would have dared——"

Mr. Sawtelle did not finish the sentence, for the inference was too horrible, and to prevent Mr. Simpson from getting the idea that bloody work might have been done, he hurried him away to the shanty.

Fortunate indeed was it for all concerned that Paul and Zenas had answered the distress call of the *Nera,* thus bringing another wireless operator to the island, otherwise at this time nothing could have been done but set off on a blind search in the old dory, and that would likely have been fruitless, since there was no indication in which direction the would-be rescuers should proceed.

The first call Mr. Sawtelle sent out was answered promptly by Ned, who recognized at once that a stranger hand was handling the key, and one could almost have fancied there was a note of anxiety in the click of the instrument as he asked, without waiting to learn why he had been summoned:

"Where is Paul?"

"He went out in the Hampton boat with Zenas last night, and has not returned."

The operator from Seaview was so impatient that he could not wait for Mr. Sawtelle to say more; but interrupted by sending out his call, thereby checking wave-sounds from the island, and the *Nera's* owner switched on the receiver, uttering an exclamation of astonishment as the words sent by Ned were formed.

"What is it?" Mr. Simpson asked eagerly, understanding that Ned was sending information of importance.

Not until the message had been received in its entirety did Mr. Sawtelle make reply, and then, wheeling about suddenly, he said with no little of excitement in his tones:

"The Seaview operator says that your Hampton boat was abandoned in that port by four men, who were taken aboard a schooner—the same vessel that has been undergoing repairs there,—an hour ago."

CHAPTER XVII

THE RESCUE

It was not difficult for the owner of Silver Fox Farm to make a fairly good guess as to what had happened, after receiving the message from Ned.

Although his anxiety was great, as may well be imagined, neither he nor Mr. Sawtelle went so far afield in their conjectures as to take in the possibility that murder had been committed, and it only remained to speculate as to where Paul and Zenas had been left by John Ed Bingham and his confederates.

"In trying to capture the smuggler they were themselves taken prisoners, and it is more than likely you will find your son at some point on the mainland," the owner of the *Nera* suggested, and this supposition Mr. Simpson believed to be correct.

The two men were eagerly discussing this matter in order to decide where search should first be made, when Ned began calling again, and after Mr. Sawtelle answered, he asked:

"What is to be done with the Hampton boat? Do you believe Paul has been killed?"

"There is no fear any such crime has been committed," Mr. Sawtelle replied, working the key so rapidly that Ned must have had difficulty in reading the sounds. "He has been left on the coast somewhere." Then, prompted by Mr. Simpson, he added, "Go yourself, or hire some one to take the boat and run up the

coast looking for Paul. We will put out from here in the power dory."

"I will go," came back the reply. "Anything more?"

"Good-by," was sent from the island station, and the owner of the *Nera* wheeled about in his chair as he said hurriedly:

"Of course you will count me in on this work, Mr. Simpson. My engineer can run the power boat, and perhaps you should remain behind to make certain everything goes ship-shape here. Do you know, I am beginning to take quite a fancy to silver fox farming, because it promises so much in the way of excitement. If you ever want a partner I'm your man."

"Why should I stay behind when the search is made for my son?" Mr. Simpson asked almost irritably.

"It was only a suggestion which I had no right to make. Owing to the size of the power dory only the engineer and one other should set off, since there are two to be brought back, which will make a full crew for the craft. As I look at the matter, there is nothing more serious in it than that Paul and Zenas have been knocking around all night without shelter, but we shall soon have them to rights. Your duties here must not be neglected, especially while you cannot trust the farmer and his sons, therefore it seemed to me it would be as well if I took your place in the boat."

Mr. Simpson soon came to understand that the owner of the *Nera* was in the right, and while the two were hastening toward the cove to make the necessary arrangements, it was decided that Mr. Simpson would remain behind on Barren island.

In the meanwhile Ned Bartlett was making his preparations, with all possible speed, for the rescue. Before sending the message to Barren island he inspected the Hampton boat, which had been abandoned by John Ed and his friends in the harbor, having drifted ashore almost directly under the bluff on which the Seaview wireless station stood.

The boat was apparently uninjured. It only remained to find some one who would accompany him as helmsman, and get leave of absence from the academy, after which he could get under way.

Thanks to his diligence at the tasks set him, Ned was in good standing at school, and had no trouble in getting cheerful permission to absent himself for several days; but it was not a simple matter to find a helmsman at such short notice. One could go later in the day; but the lad was so impatient to be in search of his friend that he would not delay a single hour. Another was ready to lend a hand if he could get some person to look after his business, and thus he found all to whom he applied; none were inclined to leave Seaview within an hour, and Ned said to himself as he turned his face toward where the Hampton boat was moored:

"I'll go alone. It won't be anything of a job to run the motor and steer at the same time. Paul has done it, and surely I can."

Within five minutes after arriving at this conclusion he was running out of the harbor, intending to skirt along the coast half a dozen miles to the southward, and then, coming about, take a diagonal course to the

northward, standing back until about opposite Sea-view, when he would make another tack.

Fortunately, so far as Paul and Zenas were concerned, the lad did not assume that the missing ones had been set ashore on the mainland. Without any good reason for so believing, he had hit upon what was very nearly the truth, and counted on finding them adrift in some frail craft, working manfully at the oars to gain a harbor.

Therefore it was that at almost the same moment two boats were putting out in search of Paul and Zenas. One leaving Barren island headed directly across to the mainland, and the other on the course just set down.

To Paul the night had neither seemed so long nor so full of discomfort as might have been supposed while he and Zenas were at the mercy of the wind and waves, unable to aid themselves in the slightest degree.

After the first outburst of grief, which well-nigh bordered on despair, Zenas succeeded in convincing his companion that their situation was by no means as desperate as it first appeared, pointing out to him that the breeze, which was not sufficiently strong to endanger the safety of the dory, carried them directly toward the mainland, and although the voyage might be prolonged until they were beset by hunger and thirst, yet, if the wind remained in the same quarter, it must finally come to an end.

So far as Zenas himself was concerned, he did not feel so positive they would come through their troubles in safety as he strove to make it appear. He knew full well what might be their fate; but it sufficed him for

the time to convince Paul that they would soon be on the mainland.

Later in the evening the lad, encouraged by his companion, lay stretched out at full length in the bottom of the dory, with his head on Zenas's knee, and there he slept as peacefully as if he had been in the shanty, lulled by the murmur of the night breeze and rocked gently by the ocean swell.

The sun had risen before Paul awakened, and his first thought was regarding the selfishness he displayed in thus sleeping while his companion kept watch; but to these self-reproaches Zenas soon put an end, by saying:

"It ain't any two to one but I've bottled up nigh as much sleep as you; but even though that hadn't happened, it was better one should get some rest than both stay awake when watchin' could avail nothing."

"Are we within sight of land yet?" and Paul looked anxiously around, failing to see anything save the curling waves, which alternately raised the dory on high, and then gently dropped her into a green valley of water.

"I allow we're about half-way between Barren island an' Seaview, an' unless I'm considerably out of my reckonin', we've been driftin' as straight for the home port as if we had steerage-way on. I ain't allowin' that we'll get inter harbor very early, lad; but you can see for yourself that we needn't look for any shift in the wind 'twixt now an' sunset, else there'd be some token of it in sky, an' all the while we'll be creepin' nearer and nearer to Seaview."

"And what if it falls a dead calm?" Paul asked, his

face paling as he thus suddenly understood that they might be held prisoners on that billowy surface with neither food nor drink.

"We've got just as much reason, boy, to say, what if a nor'easter should spring up? Here you are crossin' bridges agin before you come to 'em, an' there's no sense in it. It strikes me, if you really want trouble, you could find it right here in this 'ere boat without reachin' out inter the future. We ain't likely to have any very hearty breakfast this mornin', an' later on, when the sun gets high, we'll be needin' somethin' to drink; so keep your mind on them 'ere things if you've got to hunt out for somethin' to make you feel badly."

"I'd like a bit of Mrs. Downs's fried fish and salt pork," Paul replied, his thoughts coming down to the present, as Zenas intended they should; "but we had a hearty supper last night, and should be able to go without food one day without suffering very much."

"There! That's the way to talk!" Zenas cried heartily. "Look on the bright side of things, an' figger out how you can get along as we're fixed, instead of sayin' that our dishes may be bottom-side up 'twixt now an' this day week. I don't allow to be much of a sailor; but as you know, I spent two seasons on the Banks trawlin', an' in a fog storm me an' my mate got lost with nothin' but a sixteen-foot dory 'twixt us an' the sea. We managed to make shift four days, with about two quarts of fresh water to go an' come on; but yet I lived through it to land on Barren island an' be done up by sich as John Ed Bingham. Where do you s'pose that bloomin' scoundrel is by this time?"

Once more Zenas had changed the current of Paul's thoughts. By dint of speculating as to where the old smuggler might be, and what he would attempt in the future against Silver Fox Farm, he succeeded in keeping the lad's mind fixed upon matters other than his own condition at least two hours longer, when he cried excitedly, rising to his feet so suddenly that the dory shipped a full bucket of water from the crest of a wave:

"Look, lad! Yonder comes a power boat, an' unless I am mightily out of my reckonin' she's headin' straight for us. How about that for luck? Here's a fisherman blunderin' along jest at the time when we want him the most, an' it'll be up to us to say whether we'll keep on to Seaview, or go back to Barren island."

It is needless to say that Paul was on his feet before Zenas could more than call his attention to the tiny speck which rose and fell on the waves far in the distance, and then he fell to shouting like one who has suddenly taken leave of his senses.

A moment later, however, the lad, realizing that it was by no means certain this stranger in the distance would continue on until within hail, sank back in the stern-sheets as he said mournfully:

"There isn't one chance in twenty he'll hold his course until coming up to us. If we only had something to wave in order to attract his attention! He may get within half a mile, and, fancying we are laying here on our oars, keep on about his business."

"Crossin' more bridges, are you?" Zenas said with his purring laugh, which now sounded like a gurgle of

content. "It's likely yonder fisherman is on his course, and there's no good reason why he should change it suddenly. As for somethin' to wave, why you've lost your wits, my boy."

While speaking Zenas was pulling off his coat, and now standing on the forward thwart of the dory, he swung it vigorously above his head, making such a show that whosoever might be in that small craft so far away in the distance must have his attention attracted, unless peradventure he was asleep.

"I ain't given overly much to bettin', on account of not bein' rich enough to give way to sich tricks; but if I owned the whole of Barren island with them 'ere silver foxes thrown in, I'd stake 'em all agin the smallest doughnut Mrs. Downs ever fried, that inside of half an hour that power boat will be near enough for us to hail."

Paul made no reply, but sat in the stern-sheets watching intently the oncoming craft, which seemed momentarily to increase in size, as if fearing that should he take his eyes from her for ever so short a time, she might disappear.

During the next ten minutes Zenas alternately flourished his coat above his head, and turned to say something by way of encouragement to his companion, and then it was Paul who sprang up with an exclamation of joy and surprise:

"That is our own boat!" he shouted. "The very one that John Ed Bingham stole last night. See! The white streak, and the stem rising above the rail higher than you usually find in such a craft!"

"I declare for it, lad, I believe you're right," Zenas replied after gazing earnestly at the stranger while one might have counted twenty. "She does have a look like your craft, an' yet we won't get to feelin' too certain about it, 'cause all them Hampton boats are made pretty much after the same model. Howsomever, whether it's yours or somebody's else, she's comin' straight for us as if we had a tow-line out, and what's more, within thirty minutes we'll be headed for home or Silver Fox Farm."

Another ten minutes passed, and then both Zenas and Paul were standing erect, waving their hands and shouting frantically, for they had recognized in the occupant of the power boat none other than Ned Bartlett.

Paul's friend and partner in the wireless telegraph scheme had run southward along the shore a full ten miles without having seen any signs of that for which he sought, and was now on a course which would bring him midway between Barren island and Seaview. It is not needed one should say he had sighted the dory before Zenas saw him. On the lookout for something of the kind, he had searched the horizon with his eyes continuously, and while the helpless craft appeared to be no more than a bit of floating driftwood in the distance, he had said to himself that his mission was the same as ended.

How is it possible to describe the meeting between the two lads when the Hampton boat came up, throwing the spray either side her bow as if in very joy at having thus speedily arrived at the end of her voyage,

and Zenas and Paul leaped on board of her, taking care to carry with them the painter of the boat which John Ed Bingham had abandoned in order to set them adrift? During five minutes or more no attempt was made to shape a course either for Barren island or Seaview, for the three forgot all else save their great joy in having come together once more, and danced and hugged each other until, as Zenas afterward said, "it was as if a lot of monkeys had got loose an' were cuttin' up didoes."

Nor was the return voyage begun even after the first transports of their joy had subsided, for Ned insisted on knowing all that had happened to them, demanding that the story be told in detail, after which he in turn explained how he chanced to be in possession of the Hampton boat.

"I reckon it's time we come to an end of tongue-waggin'," Zenas said with his purring laugh, after all these explanations had been made. "I'm allowin' there's no good reason why we should drift 'round here, when them as are on Barren island would like to know that the castaways have been rescued. These 'ere stories can be told jest as well while we're under way, so start up your motor, boys, an' let's get alongside the *Nera,* where we can set down to a dandy breakfast sich as that cook knows how to fix up, for I'm willin' to admit I'm mighty sharkish jest now."

"But what about huntin' for the old dory?" Ned asked. "Whoever telegraphed from Barren island said that somebody would go out in her, and if we put

straight back now she'll be knocking around here all day on a fool's errand."

"I reckon they can take care of themselves," Zenas replied. "You'd best finish up this 'ere rescue business, Ned, an' it can only be done by landin' us at Silver Fox Farm. After we've had a bite to eat an' somethin' to drink, it'll be time enough to hunt for the hunters."

Therefore it was that after this delay of at least ten minutes, the boat was put about on a course which would bring her, as nearly as Zenas could judge without a compass, to Barren island, and John Ed Bingham's dory followed perforce in her wake, for it would have grieved Paul not a little had he lost this souvenir of his disagreeable adventure.

Never before had Barren island appeared to Paul as a beautiful place. Heretofore it had seemed desolate, forbidding in its loneliness; but on this forenoon, when the Hampton boat entered the cove, rounding to under the lee of the *Nera*, it was in his mind that he had never seen any spot more lovely.

As a matter of course their approach had been observed by all on the island, and Mr. Simpson was standing at the water's edge waiting to welcome his son when Paul, leaping into John Ed Bingham's dory, pulled hurriedly ashore to be clasped affectionately in his father's arms as if his absence had been of long duration.

"Did you suffer much?" Mr. Simpson asked solicitously, and Paul laughed joyously as he replied:

"Zenas wouldn't allow it, father. He appeared to think only of me, without giving heed to himself, and

during all the night held my head on his knees rather than awaken me by changing position."

"I wish there were more like Zenas in this world," Mr. Simpson muttered, and then called upon his son for the story of the misadventure, after which the two went on board the *Nera* for the long-delayed breakfast.

As to where Mr. Sawtelle might be just then no one appeared greatly concerned. It was believed that, failing to find Paul and Zenas at the first attempt, he would put in to Seaview in order to learn if any information had been received there concerning them, and also to hold counsel with Captain Tobi regarding the steps which were to be taken toward repairing the yacht.

"I believe he is there at this moment," Mr. Simpson said after the matter had been under discussion a few moments. "It is only natural that he would run into the harbor to learn what he might about the abandoning of the Hampton boat, and then he'd be told that Ned had started in search of you."

"Then it stands me in hand to be at the station. He surely would make an attempt to get into communication with the island, and the proper course for me is to be in readiness for wireless business."

Mr. Simpson made no protest. He had already said that it was his intention to take Zenas with him into the thicket, in order to learn if John Ed had succeeded in doing any mischief to the foxes, and, therefore, suggested that Ned and Paul go to the shanty immediately after breakfast, leaving Cushing and himself at liberty to pursue their investigations.

Paul did not linger over the delayed meal as he might have done under other circumstances. He had succeeded in persuading himself that Mr. Sawtelle would attempt to get in touch with Barren island, and was eager to be at his post in order to put an end to further searching.

When, half an hour later, the two lads were in the shanty with the apparatus ready for use, Ned said in a tone of envy:

"It's mighty snug here, Paul, and the pity of it is that I'm forced to remain at the Academy when I might be having my share of all this excitement and adventure."

"It strikes me that you are indeed getting your full share," Paul replied with a smile. "It's true that you haven't been sent adrift in an open boat without oars or sail; but you have had the biggest kind of a finger in the wind-up, which ought to satisfy any ordinary boy. Besides, this station wouldn't be of much service, so far as silver fox farming goes, if you were not at Seaview to gather such information as is needed from time to time. I reckon father is thoroughly well convinced there wasn't any money wasted in installing the two stations. Through them we have saved the yacht from foundering, to say nothing of the lives that might have been lost if she had gone down outside. Then it is positive that but for the wireless, John Ed Bingham would have worked his will on this island long since."

"Of course, it has been a paying speculation; but I want more of it for my share."

"And you'll get it next year. Do you know, Mr. Sawtelle believes this island would be the very place in which to make experiments in air-ships, and it may not be improbable that he will come down here next summer."

"Air-ships!" Ned exclaimed in astonishment; but before he could give words to the thoughts which crowded into his mind, both he and Paul were startled, even though they had been hoping to hear it, when the call p-l, p-l, p-l, sounded sharply on the receiver.

"Mr. Sawtelle!" Paul exclaimed as he gave the answering signal, and then the boys read the following:

"Have seen nothing of the boat. Am in Seaview—Who is at the instrument?"

"It is Paul, Mr. Sawtelle. Ned came out in the Hampton boat and picked us up. We believed you would go to Seaview and try to telegraph here."

"I forgot at first that you were the only operator, else I should not have made the attempt. Am glad you are safe. Who is the man that was to attend to my business?"

"Captain Tobi Thompson. Look for a fat man near the shipyard."

"Tell your father a schooner answering the description of the one he believed Bingham was concerned with, has gone ashore on the reef five miles north of here. It might be possible for him to catch the poacher."

"I'll get word to him at once. He is in the woods looking after the foxes. One of us boys will remain

in the station all day in case you want to send any word."

"I shall wait here until you have found your father," came back the reply, and Paul said as he rose to his feet and turned toward Ned:

"I'll go over to the woods; you stay here."

"Of course, and mighty glad of the chance."

It was not a simple matter to find the two who were strolling through the thicket looking for tokens which would tell that John Ed had succeeded in working mischief; but when more than half an hour had elapsed Paul came upon the searchers, both of whom looked remarkably well pleased.

"So far as can be seen he didn't find the animals," Mr. Simpson cried as if believing his son had come for such information. "I have no question but that he did his best——"

"Mr. Sawtelle has just telegraphed that a schooner, which may be the one we saw off here, is ashore on Beekman's ledge. He says now is perhaps your time to catch John Ed."

"Crickey, if that isn't luck!" Zenas cried in triumph. "It seems almost too good to be true!"

Mr. Simpson made no reply until after walking rapidly in the direction of the cove a full minute, and then Paul asked impatiently:

"What are you going to do about it, sir?"

"Do? Why, go to Seaview as rapidly as the Hampton boat will carry me; swear out a warrant against Bingham for murderous assault, and take a sheriff's officer to the stranded schooner."

"Of course that's what's to be done, an' mighty quick for fear the craft will be floated!" Zenas cried excitedly. "He's always contrived to keep himself out of trouble, no matter how much mischief he was concerned in; but this time we've got him foul, if that blessed schooner will only stick to the rocks."

"You are to telegraph Mr. Sawtelle, if you can get in communication with him again, that I will be in Seaview within two hours," Mr. Simpson said hurriedly to his son, without giving any heed to the outburst of Cushing's. "I shall take Zenas with me; you must stay here to look after matters. See to it Downs and his sons provide plenty of fish; but take care that they do not go into the woods. You know what should or should not be done, and with Ned, as well as the crew of the *Nera,* to help you, I expect everything here will go on as well as if I remained on the island."

That Mr. Simpson was in a hurry to set off in pursuit of the old smuggler, could be told by the fact that he did not linger to give more detailed instructions; but hastened at his best pace toward the cove, Zenas following close at his heels like a playful puppy, as if his joy was so great he could not behave in a rational manner.

"We'll lay John Ed by the heels before you see us again," he shouted to Paul by way of farewell, and the lad replied grimly:

"That's what you counted on doing last night when everything was working exactly as you would have them."

"Don't fear that I'll make another fluke! This time

I'll give John Ed credit for havin' a little bit of sense, instead of playin' him for a stark, natural fool."

It would have pleased Paul if he could have gone in the Hampton boat, or, at least, down to the shore to witness the departure; but his instructions were to get into communication with Mr. Sawtelle, and he hastened to the station, saying as he entered, where Ned was seated in front of the instruments as if expecting to be called:

"Try to get the owner of the *Nera*."

"That won't be hard work. He has just asked if you had found your father," and Ned sounded n-d until it was answered, after which Paul took the key and repeated the message entrusted to him.

"I will wait here till he arrives. In case we should not return to-night, you lads are to use the yacht as if she was yours. Brownson and Lumley will make matters pleasant for you."

"What's the meaning of all that?" Ned asked curiously after he had spelled out the dots and dashes sent by Mr. Sawtelle.

"Father and Zenas are starting for Seaview in the hope of catching John Ed while his schooner is hung up on Beekman's ledge. You and I are to run the island, and you'll have a chance to see what silver fox farming is like, although there's little fear we'll live as strenuous a life as I have these past few days."

"And we're to stay on board the yacht, according to that message."

"Yes, and it will be a good opportunity for us to experiment with the wireless, for you can use the ap-

paratus on board the *Nera,* while I hang to the old stand."

While speaking Paul could see, through the window of the shanty, the Hampton boat as she dashed out of the cove at full speed, his father and Zenas on board, and, pointing toward the little craft, he said with a smile:

"We're the farmers now, and it is up to us to see that the work is done properly while they are away——"

He ceased speaking very suddenly, for at that instant Sam Downs entered the shanty, looking perplexed and at the same time irritated.

"*Now* what's goin' on?" he demanded sharply, as if believing some wrong had been done him, and Paul asked in bewilderment:

"What do you mean? What *is* going on?"

"That's jest what I've come up here to find out. Wasn't that your father and Zenas in the big boat?"

"Of course it was."

"An' didn't the owner of the yacht go off in the old dory this mornin'?"

"Surely he did. Why are you asking such foolish questions when it is possible for you to answer them as well as I can?"

"We want to know what's the meanin' of all this cavortin' back an' forth?" Sam cried angrily. "Father an' us boys have got some rights on this 'ere island, an' we don't allow that everythin' can be turned upside down while we're kept in the dark!"

CHAPTER XVIII

SAM'S OUTBURST

PAUL was thoroughly surprised by Sam's outburst; it seemed to him as if the boy had taken advantage of the first moment when the owner of Silver Fox Farm was absent, to make trouble, regardless of the promises which had been given by his father and his mother that both he and Ernest should work for Mr. Simpson's best interests.

Perhaps Paul laid to Sam's door more than the island lad was really guilty of, for certain it is he set it down in his mind that Sam had come to the shanty intending to make a disturbance of some kind, simply because it seemed to him that now was the time when he might bully the village boys with impunity.

Because of such belief, and because it seemed to him necessary he assert immediately the authority which had been delegated him by his father, lest worse signs of insubordination should be shown, he asked in a tone of anger:

"After all that has happened since that old smuggler hailed us for a tow, do you claim either father or I are bound to give you and yours any explanation of our movements? You have not yet shown yourself entitled to confidence, and it strikes me that instead of claiming you have any rights on this island, it would be better if you held your peace."

"An' give your father a chance to do whatever he pleases with us, eh?" Sam demanded, much to Paul's mystification, for he failed utterly to understand the meaning of the words.

"Look here, Sam Downs, you and your family have caused no end of trouble for my father during the short time the foxes have been on this island, and now if you count on raising a disturbance in the belief that it can be safely done while father is away, you are making a big mistake. I am in charge here, and intend that matters shall go on properly. What's more, I've the power to force them my way, for at the least show of trouble with you I shall call upon the crew of the *Nera* to take a hand in the matter."

"Then it's jest as Ernest allowed!" Sam cried passionately. "We're to be 'rested an' lugged off so's your father can bring a lot of strangers here. An' I'm to hold my tongue and not say a word, else I'll get laid by the heels before the officers come from Seaview, am I?"

"Now what are you talking about, Sam Downs?" Paul cried impatiently. "What ridiculous idea have you in your head about being arrested? It was understood between my father and yours that he and you boys had turned about, faithfully promising to have no more dealings with John Ed Bingham, and agreeing to attend to work according to the bargain you first made."

"An' that's jest what we have done!" Sam shouted, seemingly in a paroxysm of rage and terror. "My father told your father everything that we'd put up

agin him, an' it was agreed to give us another trial——"

"Well, that's just what you're having; but it strikes me that you can't keep to any promise very many hours. Father and Zenas have hardly been away from the island five minutes, and you are making a row for some reason best known to yourself."

"Yes, an' a fine kind of a trial we've had when you start off for the officers to arrest us within twenty-four hours after you've agreed to let bygones be bygones!"

Paul was evidently on the point of making an angry reply; but before he could speak Ned interrupted by saying:

"Look here, I don't believe either of you fellows know what you're talking about. Paul, why don't you first find out what Sam came here for?"

"He came to make a row because father didn't explain to him just exactly why he set off for Seaview," Paul retorted hotly, and Sam cried with a greater show of anger, if indeed that could be possible:

"I came here to know why, if you was going to have father, an' Ernest, an' me 'rested, we wasn't told? It had been agreed that we should have another chance to show we'd live up to the bargain made first; but it seems that was only a blind to keep us here quiet till the sheriff came."

"Why do you think the sheriff is coming?" Ned asked, stepping deliberately in front of Paul to prevent hot words, and determined that these two boys should each understand what the other had in mind.

"Why do I believe it?" Sam screamed. "Because Zenas told me so, that's why I believe it!"

"Zenas told you my father had gone for the sheriff in order to arrest you?" Paul cried in amazement.

"Ay, that's what he did. I was comin' up from the shore jest as he an' your father went down at full speed, an' when I asked him what was afoot, he said they were goin' for the sheriff!"

"There, that explains the matter," Ned said with a laugh. "You two fellows might have come to fisticuffs if I hadn't interfered. Now is your chance, Paul, to tell him how big a mistake he has made."

"Most likely Zenas told you no more than that they were in a hurry to find the sheriff?" Paul said to Sam inquiringly, and the latter replied, still in anger:

"Of course that's what he said."

"But he didn't tell you that it was for the purpose of having your father, Ernest and yourself arrested?"

"What else could he want of a sheriff?" Sam demanded fiercely.

"To arrest John Ed Bingham."

"But John Ed Bingham got away, an' that's the last you'll see of him for many a day."

"Now look here, Sam," and understanding by this time the mistake the island boy had made, Paul's temper vanished entirely. "If Zenas hadn't been in such a hurry he would have told you, most likely, that we just got word from Mr. Sawtelle by the wireless that the schooner in which we believe John Ed to be, is ashore on Beekman's ledge. If father can get a warrant out for him on the charge of a murderous assault

upon Zenas, and find a sheriff's officer to serve it before the schooner is floated, he will have that old smuggler where there'll be no danger of his paying another visit to Silver Fox Farm for a good many months."

An expression of deepest relief came over Sam's face while Paul was speaking, and when the lad had come to an end of his explanations the island boy cried fervently:

"Glory be! If John Ed can be laid by the heels for a spell it'll show him that he can't have things his own way same's he has been doin'. An' that's the lesson he's needed this many a year!"

"Do your father and Ernest believe as you did?"

"Why, of course; they're all mixed up over it. Mother's cryin', an' father's sittin' in the kitchen with his head in his hands like he was never goin' to speak agin. I know we started in to do a mighty dirty trick; but it was 'cause we'd been scared 'bout out of our wits. After it seemed as if your father had agreed to let things go, it tied us all up in a knot to think he'd take the law on us when we was really tryin' to do the square thing."

"Go down to the house as quickly as you can, and repeat what I've said. Don't stay here to talk, for it's sheer cruelty to let your people believe any longer than is necessary that they are to be arrested."

Paul literally pushed the lad out of the shanty, watching until he had run at full speed to his home, and then he said to Ned:

"I'm not certain but that you are the one to be in charge here while father is away, because you've got

a good deal more sound sense than I have. If you hadn't interfered, Sam and I might have come to blows before we understood each other."

"The only trouble with you is that things have been going so cross-grained you're on the lookout every moment for trouble, and ready to find it even when it doesn't exist. Once they've got hold of Bingham, and Barren island has settled down into the same desolate kind of a place it was when we came over here to install this station, you'll be less suspicious, and more like your real self. Suppose we go aboard the yacht? I want to see what she looks like."

"But one of us must stay here in case Mr. Sawtelle wants to send any word."

"We can use the wireless station aboard the *Nera* as well as this one. There isn't much chance there'll be any message sent for a couple of hours, because he knows that your father is on the way to Seaview."

Understanding that they would not be neglecting their duty, Paul was more than willing to act upon this suggestion, and the two set off for the cove, not taking the usual precaution to disconnect the instruments now there was no longer any fear the Downs family might attempt to work injury to the apparatus.

Their course lay directly past the farm-house, and when they were opposite the kitchen door Mr. Downs came out, bringing the boys to a halt by saying:

"I don't want you to feel any ways hurt agin Sam for breakin' out as I'm allowin' he did. You see when Zenas told him your father was goin' for the sheriff, an' we knew John Ed had got clear of the island, it

stood to reason we'd believe it was on our account the officers were coming, so we felt pretty blue. Sam he allers did fly off quick, so up he goes to you, an' I allow he let off considerable strong."

"That's all right, Mr. Downs," Paul replied laughingly. "Fortunately Ned was there, and had common sense enough to understand what might be in the wind, while I was thinking that Sam had it in mind to make a row."

"Then there's a chance John Ed may be caught, after all?" Mr. Downs asked eagerly.

"If father and Zenas can get a warrant in time, which seems probable, it will be done, for the chances are that he's on board the schooner. By the way, I was to tell you to catch some fish for the foxes."

"Well, now, I don't jest see how that's goin' to be done," and Mr. Downs rubbed his chin reflectively. "There's the dory up in Swallow-Tailed cove, an' it's pretty nigh low water. I don't reckon we could take one of them dandified boats belongin' to the yacht, 'cause fishin' for cunners ain't no ways what you might call cleanly work. How would it do to kill three or four old hens, jest to kind'er stay their stomachs till nightfall, an' then we can get out fishin'?"

"I don't know that father would be willing to give them such an expensive diet," Paul said laughingly. "It seems to me that feeding foxes on hens would be cutting it pretty rich."

"Bless your soul, lad, I'd kill off the whole bloomin' flock, an' do it in a way of thanksgivin', if John Ed could be brought up with a round turn, so's there

wouldn't be any chance of his comin' back to Barren island to make it hot for us. I'll slaughter the hens all right, an' a couple of extra ones for you an' Ned, if so be you're inclined to take pot luck with us."

"The orders were for us to stay on the yacht. You see she's got a wireless apparatus, and by remaining aboard we can hear if a call is sent out from Seaview."

"Do you reckon your father would let you know if he was so lucky as to get his hands on John Ed?"

"I believe he would send word at once, or, at least, as soon as he got back to Seaview."

"An' I hope he does, for it'll take a big burden off my mind when I know that miserable scoundrel is where he can't force other people to do his biddin'. I always claimed to be an honest man, an' allow I would have been till he come 'round threatenin' so strong that I jest the same as lost my head. Say, it seems kind'er queer that the boys an' I made so much fun about your sendin' words on the air, an' here we are believin' somethin' in the way of pleasant news is comin' to us through that contraption yonder. After this I'll be mighty careful not to turn my nose up at anythin' that's told me."

Then the farmer hastened away to prepare his thanksgiving meal for the foxes, and the two lads continued on to the cove, where they were speedily hailed from the deck of the *Nera* by Mr. Brownson:

"Are you coming aboard, Paul?"

"Ay, sir; if you'll send a boat ashore."

"That we will, for we want to hear the news. It's

almost fortunate the *Nera's* disabled, else she might have been sent off to Seaview post haste."

The boys were taken on board the yacht, and during an hour Mr. Sawtelle's two guests devoted their time to escorting them over the dainty little craft, which, but for the wireless apparatus installed by these two visitors, might at that moment have been lying on the bottom of the ocean.

It was when they came to the snug quarters just aft the wheel-house, where were the instruments of the wireless apparatus, that the boys were most enthusiastic in their praise, for there indeed was such an equipment as they had desired to have, and the wonder to them was that when the call of distress had been sent out it should not have been heard at a greater distance than Barren island.

"This makes the shanty look like a pretty poor place, eh?" Ned said as he seated himself at the desk and fingered the key. "I'd like nothing better than to run this instrument one season."

Then, much to the surprise of both the lads, Mr. Lumley said in a matter-of-fact tone:

"You will probably have the opportunity, my lad. Sawtelle seems to have fallen in love with Silver Fox Farm, and it'll surprise me very much if he doesn't spend the greater portion of next summer in the vicinity of Barren island."

"I'm afraid that would do me but little good," Ned said wistfully, and the gentleman replied with a smile:

"Considering the fact that but for what you two boys have done the *Nera* would not be lying snug in this

harbor waiting for a tug, I am of the opinion that her owner will be only too well pleased to have you on board for as long as may be to your pleasure."

Paul, on first entering the wireless operator's quarters, had set everything in readiness for the receiving of a message, knowing that by this time the Hampton boat must have arrived in Seaview, and while Mr. Sawtelle's guests were relating their experience of wreck and of waiting almost without hope for aid, the call p—l, p—l, came through the air sharp and distinct.

Ned, who yet remained at the desk, answered it, and through the ether came the words:

"Warrant for Bingham's arrest issued. Simpson has taken officers in motor boat to the ledge. Should return within an hour. At what station are you receiving this?"

"We are on the yacht," Ned replied.

"Find it better quarters than in the shanty?"

"Indeed it is. A fellow who couldn't work this apparatus ought to give up the business."

"Yours are rather crude; but I am sending for outfits to be installed here, and at the island, which will put to shame the low power apparatus aboard the *Nera*."

Then came the good-by, showing that Mr. Sawtelle had no further communication to make, and Ned and Paul looked at each other wonderingly, the latter saying after a long pause:

"Do you suppose he means that the apparatus he sent for are to be used by us?"

"He does indeed," Mr. Lumley said emphatically. "We were discussing the matter last night, and it was

decided that since our offers to pay for the service rendered when we were in such distress had been refused, we would make at least some feeble attempt to square ourselves. You are to have the best in the way of wireless that money can buy, and what is more, before Sawtelle leaves Seaview he will have made a contract with some carpenter to put up a station on the island in which it will be a pleasure to stay."

Then Mr. Lumley showed the boys some rude sketches which had been made by the owner of the *Nera* giving an outline of how he believed the wireless stations should be arranged, and they gave no further heed to the passage of time, so excited and interested were both. The possibility that they might conduct their experiments with everything that could be procured by money had never even been dreamed of, and now it was difficult to believe that all their desires were to be gratified.

It was while they were thus engaged, giving no heed to anything around them, that the shrill tooting of a steam whistle caused the lads to spring up in something very like alarm, and indeed they had good reason to be startled, for even at Seaview it was an uncommon occurrence to hear such a sound coming over the water.

The operator's quarters opened on to a bridge, or platform, which led to the deck below, and as they stepped out on this narrow balcony Paul cried in surprise mingled with alarm:

"Now what can be the matter? Whoever heard of a tug-boat coming out to Barren island?"

"She must be one Sawtelle has sent to tow this yacht

where she can be repaired," Mr. Brownson said, and one might have fancied he was pleased at the opportunity to leave Silver Fox Farm.

"But she couldn't have got here in this short time," Paul cried, seemingly determined to believe that the coming of the tug-boat meant something more in the way of disaster to his father's scheme, but Ned shouted as he waved his hand joyously to a man who stood in the door of the stranger's pilot-house:

"It's Captain Tobi; but where could he have picked up a steamer so quickly?"

"Ahoy there!" came in a tempest note from the tug as a very fleshy man went down the short flight of steps leading to the deck.

"Ahoy on the tug!" Paul cried, failing to realize that it was not his place to make a reply from the yacht.

"Shall we run alongside, or anchor here? Oh, it's you is it? Where's your father?"

"He went over to Seaview this morning. Mr. Sawtelle, the owner of the yacht, is there too looking for you to see about hiring a tug."

The steamer's engine had been stopped, and she was lying idly on the water when Captain Thompson answered in what might have been called a tempestuous oily tone:

"I come upon this 'ere craft by accident, so to speak, an' havin' had orders in advance, as you might say, closed a deal with the captain to tow the yacht over to Seaview, where I'm allowin' she can be put into shape as well as if he carried her further off. Better let her slide up alongside of them 'ere fenders," the fleshy man

added to the captain of the steamer, and an instant later demanded of Paul:

"What kind of out-riggin' have you got swung 'round that craft?"

"It's a scheme of Zenas's, sir. He allowed the timbers would keep her hove up so she wouldn't take so much water through the shaft-box."

"I ought'er known that was one of Zenas Cushing's contrivances. He's a master-hand at patchin' up, accordin' to his idees; but he allers leaves things lookin' ragged-like. Who are them 'ere idlers overhangin' the rail?"

"The crew of the yacht, sir," Paul replied.

"Then set 'em to work haulin' Zenas's lumber out so's we can come alongside to make fast. I never allowed the crew of sich a craft as that would strain themselves very hard workin'; but did reckon they'd get life enough in their bodies to handle a hawser now an' then."

Mr. Brownson, who appeared to be enjoying Captain Thompson's fault-finding, now called the mate of the *Nera* to bear a hand, and in a twinkling the old ship-master was roaring out his notes of command, first to those aboard the yacht, and then to the crew of the tug-boat, until it was as if every part of the island reverberated with the noise.

Even though Mr. Downs and his two sons had been deaf as posts, they must have heard Captain Tobi's vigorous commands in not overly choice language, and when Paul looked shoreward to learn if they were aware of the steamer's arrival, he saw the three coming

at full speed from the spring where the foxes were to be fed, and the old sea captain had not succeeded in working the tug-boat alongside the *Nera* when Mr. Downs was shouting words of welcome from the shore.

"Wa'al, bless my eyes, Captain Tobi! It does do a man good to see you! I never expected to hear you rippin' 'round workin' a craft at anchorage agin', an' now here you are at Barren island!"

"Is that you, Daniel? Jest as shiftless an' jest as lazy as ever, I allow, else you'd be out here lendin' a hand to clean up some of Zenas Cushing's litter."

"How do you expect a man's goin' to get out there when he hasn't a boat to his name?"

"Haven't got a boat, eh?" and Captain Thompson roared until the foxes must have slinked into their holes alarmed. "What kind of a man are you to be on this forsaken place without a craft of some kind?"

"Our dory is up in Swallow-Tailed cove, an' we can't get her out till high water. All the rest of the boats headed for Seaview this mornin', like as if a county fair was goin' on there."

"They tell me Ben Simpson has gone too?" Captain Thompson roared, as if believing he could only get true information of the owner of Silver Fox Farm from Mr. Downs.

"Yes, he's on the track of John Ed, so they say: counts on havin' him 'rested."

"Counts on 'restin' John Ed?" Captain Thompson cried as if in amazement, and ceasing that instant to give any attention to those who had been obeying his

commands. "Does Ben Simpson allow he can handle that slippery scoundrel?"

"They do say he's aboard the schooner that went ashore at Beekman's ledge; but Paul can tell you all about it; he got the news on the air through that bird cage that's hangin' up yonder."

Captain Tobi turned to face the two lads, as he cried in a thunder note which seemingly came from the very depths of his lungs:

"What's that Daniel's givin' me, lad, about John Ed's schooner bein' ashore?"

"That's what Mr. Sawtelle telegraphed, sir. Father and Zenas started off in the Hampton boat at once to get a warrant. About an hour ago we got word from Seaview that the sheriff's officers had gone with father to the ledge in the hope of finding John Ed there."

"Well, all I can say is if they do, it'll be the best job I've heard of for many a day. It's a good many years since I've been after that precious smuggler tryin' to get pay for my *Zoe* that he jewed me out of, and if so be your father contrives to fetch him up sharp, I'll have a finger in the pie."

Then, as if suddenly realizing that the crew of the yacht and the tug-boat might be wasting a moment or two of time, he turned furiously upon them, commanding that they do this, or that, or the other, in almost the same breath, until the men, puzzled to know what his real desires were, stood staring at him like statues.

"I don't suppose you've many men in Seaview like the old captain there, eh?" Mr. Brownson asked in a low tone of Paul, and the lad replied laughingly:

"None who can make so much noise as he, sir."

"I should fancy not, else the more quiet portion of the population would be obliged to move out of town."

"Are you comin' ashore, Capt'in Tobi?" Mr. Downs called after a time, during which the old ship-master had succeeded in bringing the steamer alongside the yacht.

"I reckon I may as well, Daniel, seein's how I don't want to tow a man's craft away without his knowledge an' consent, so to speak. I ain't certain but that I've been a little brash in bringin' this 'ere tug-boat over before seein' the owner of the yacht; but she happened along jest in the nick of time, as it seemed to me, an' I wasn't goin' to miss sich a chance to save a dollar or two. I reckon we'll hang up here until Mr. —— Mr. what's-his-name comes back, so I may as well neighbor with you for a spell, Daniel."

"I'll be glad to see you, Captain Tobi, an' so will mother. Reckon I'd best kill a chicken, 'cause this is kind of a thanksgiving day with me, or will be, if John Ed is laid by the heels."

"Kill a chicken!" the old man roared as if in anger. "What's the matter with salt pork an' fresh fish? If you've got a prime little rock cod right there for your wife to fry, same's she used to, I'd like to put my teeth in it, for it would go a good deal better'n all the kickshaws you can set out. I never did go much on chickens when the pork barrel was well filled."

It pleased the boys not a little to see Farmer Downs consulting with his sons as to how it would be possible

to procure that for supper which Captain Tobi most wanted, and Paul whispered to Ned:

"It wouldn't surprise me if Mr. Downs and his sons tried to drag their dory across from Swallow-Tailed cove to the shore, for the sake of getting fish to please Captain Tobi."

The male members of the Downs family were not so much inclined for such work as Paul had suggested, for after consulting each other the old farmer hailed the tug-boat again, and asked if they would "favor him with the lend of a boat for half an hour?"

"Got to go out an' catch your fish if you cook any to-night?" Captain Thompson cried boisterously. "Of course you can have a boat; I've chartered this 'ere tug, an' when it comes to a case of havin' a codfish right out'er the water, I'd sooner you took her, crew an' all, than go without it. Hi, one of you sogers there! Pull ashore for Mr. Daniel Downs! He can set you aboard agin as he goes out'er the cove."

One might have imagined from the noise which was made, that Barren island had suddenly become a populous village. Under Captain Tobi's energetic management the Downs boys were sent out fishing. The old farmer bustled to and fro between the house and the cove, evidently bent on overseeing his wife's preparations for supper, and keeping an eye on what was being done aboard the tug and the yacht, while the crews of both craft were made to jump here and there upon some needless duty, seemingly for no other reason than that the old ship-master might see them moving about under his command.

It was while Paul and Ned were watching with deepest interest and amusement all this bustle and seeming confusion, that the instrument in the yacht's station clicked off the call p-l, p-l, p-l.

When Ned had answered it he received the following message from Mr. Sawtelle:

"Bingham has just been brought to Seaview under arrest. He was found on the schooner. Am told Captain Thompson has gone to Barren island. Have you heard from him?"

"He is here with a tug awaiting your arrival," Ned replied, and then as he got the signal that no further communication was to be made, he ran to the bow of the yacht, shouting to Mr. Downs, who was half-way between the shore and his home:

"The sheriff has got John Ed!"

"Glory be!" the old man shouted again and again, and then turned suddenly and ran with all speed to impart the welcome intelligence to "mother."

CHAPTER XIX

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

THE information which had come from Seaview aroused the greatest excitement on the island, and from various causes.

Mr. Sawtelle's guests, who had come to believe they must remain at Silver Fox Farm, because of what Paul and Zenas had done toward saving the yacht, until Mr. Simpson had finally beaten off the poachers, could now return to their homes. Mr. Downs and his family were rejoicing in the belief that John Ed would not soon be at liberty to do them an injury in revenge for their turning against him. While Paul and Ned were jubilant because now it seemed as if the foxes would remain undisturbed for so long a time that the business of farming for pelts would get a healthy start.

Captain Tobi was by no means the least excited of all those on Barren island. He believed that now had come the time when he could force the old smuggler to pay the amount so long due on the purchase of the *Zoe,* and, as Zenas often said, "a dollar laid mighty near Capt'in Tobi's heart."

Even the crew of the yacht joined in the general rejoicings because it appeared as if John Ed's career was likely to be cut short, although they knew nothing whatsoever regarding the man, and were not interested in silver fox farming. The fact that their employer was

in some slight degree concerned, was sufficient to excite them.

Captain Tobi no longer fumed and fretted because the sailors on the tug and the yacht did not move in as lively a manner as he believed they should; but ceased work entirely to go on shore where, until a regular feast of fried salt pork and codfish had been prepared by Mrs. Downs, he listened to the old farmer's story of what John Ed had tried to do on Barren island.

On board the *Nera* Paul and Ned, urged by Mr. Lumley and Mr. Brownson, lingered long at the table that night, telling of their efforts to install the wireless stations when their desires were far in excess of their funds, and the meal had not yet come to an end when the sound as of some craft chafing against the Nera's hull, caused them to spring to their feet in delight, at the very moment Zenas was heard hailing:

"Ahoy on the yacht! Is this the way you receive conquerin' heroes?"

When Paul gained the deck of the *Nera* he saw the Hampton boat lying alongside, while made fast astern, as if she had been towed across from Seaview, was the old power dory. All those who had departed from the island in the morning were clambering over the rail of the yacht, and Mr. Sawtelle and Mr. Simpson were questioning the master of the tug-boat as to what Captain Tobi's plans might be.

As was only natural, Zenas had singled out the boys as his audience, for he was nearly bursting with desire to tell the story of John Ed's capture, and Paul gratified him by asking:

"Did he make much of a fuss when the sheriff arrested him?"

"John Ed is too wise a guy to do anythin' of that kind. He gave himself up as if the one thing he ached for was the jail, an' had the nerve to stand up to your father an' swear he'd never stepped foot on Barren island since the foxes were let loose."

"What about his towing us out from the island and setting the boat adrift?" Paul asked angrily.

"The old fox hadn't seen me when he began to stuff your father with the story that he didn't even know where Barren island was; but when I stepped out an' asked if he didn't want the dory he'd left with us, he shut his mouth like a clam."

"Did you have any trouble in getting a warrant for his arrest?"

"Not a bit. Mr. Sawtelle—an' say, lads, that man is sure a dandy—he'd been to see a lawyer, an' could tell him all 'bout what John Ed had done, so when we struck the town everythin' was ready for us to go before the judge. It didn't take five minutes to get the thing done ship-shape an' bundle the sheriff's men aboard the Hampton boat. When we got to Beekman's ledge there was the schooner hard an' fast, an' there John Ed was caught like a rat in a trap, for after leavin' his dory for us to starve in, an' settin' your craft adrift, there wasn't any way for him to get ashore, except by swimmin', an' it's what you might call a reasonably long stretch to the mainland from the rocks. We ran alongside an' went over the rail without hearin' a yip from anybody."

"Did John Ed stand in plain sight while you were coming up to the schooner?" Paul asked curiously.

"He hadn't tumbled to who we were till it was too late to dodge inter the hold. Oh, John Ed's nobody's fool, an' when he saw the jig was up he made the best of it. I had swore that he knocked me silly on the night he sneaked out of the farm-house, an' when one of the officers told him 'bout it, he looked at me mighty wicked, but had the good sense to hold his tongue."

"Then you carried him to Seaview?" Ned suggested when Zenas ceased speaking as if his story was told.

"Yes, the officers had him fast, an' he never so much as turned a hair from the time we left the stranded schooner till he went ashore on his way to the jail. Unless he can find somebody who'll go bail, which ain't in any way likely after all the mischief he's done on this 'ere coast, he'll stay in prison till his trial comes off, somewhere 'bout October. Then, unless things go mighty queer, he's sure of free lodgin's for a considerable spell of time. What about the Downs family?"

Paul gave him a detailed account of all that had happened since he and Mr. Simpson got under way for Seaview, and the story was hardly more than finished when Captain Tobi came aboard the yacht to tell Mr. Sawtelle what he proposed to do with the *Nera*.

The old ship-master employed a quantity of words in the telling of what was a short tale. He explained with many a hurricane note that he had hired the captain of the tug-boat to tow the yacht to Seaview at a greatly reduced price, owing to his having happened to be in that vicinity, and covered two or three sheets of

paper with figures to show how greatly it would be to Mr. Sawtelle's pecuniary advantage if the *Nera* was repaired in the shipyard of which he was part owner.

A lengthy discussion ensued, during which Zenas whispered to the boys that he would be glad to go to the shanty, where they could be alone.

"It's a mighty fine place, is this 'ere cabin; but somehow I'll feel more like myself if we can crawl off where we belong. Besides, there's nothin' for us to do here, an' I'd like to hear what Daniel an' his precious sons have to say 'bout John Ed's arrest an' the work that has been done by your wireless contraption."

No particular heed was paid to the three when they stole softly on deck, clambered aboard the *Nera's* tender, and pulled ashore, where, within less than two minutes after they landed, Mr. Downs, followed by Sam and Ernest, came hurriedly out of the house.

"So you've really bottled John Ed up?" the farmer cried in apparent delight as he seized Zenas by the hand, shaking it violently.

"That's what we've done, an' it'll be a long spell, 'cordin' to my way of thinkin', before anybody else will dare to meddle with the foxes," Zenas cried triumphantly.

"It has taken the biggest kind of a load off the shoulders of my family, to say nothin' of myself," Mr. Downs added in a tone of thankfulness. "You know, Zenas, that when John Ed has had a grudge agin anybody in this part of the country, he's allers contrived to pay it without gettin' himself inter a scrape. If I hadn't been so mortally afraid of the old scoundrel I'd

never tried to turn Mr. Simpson up the way I did; but he had me where I didn't dare to say my soul was my own."

"An' he'd be cavortin' 'round the country this blessed minute, ready for any kind of mischief he could lay his hand to, if it hadn't been for that wireless contraption the boys set up," Zenas suggested with a grin.

"I know it, I know it! An' it only shows what an old fool I've been. I might'er known Mr. Simpson wouldn't have put good money out on sich a lot of truck if there hadn't been somethin' in it. Neither the boys nor I could figger out how anybody'd be able to send words on nothin' but air, an' we haven't got it through our thick heads yet, when it comes to that. It's a big thing, though, 'specially for fox farmin', an' to think that a couple of lads like them two did it all!"

"I'm allowin' the business will go along all right from this out," Zenas suggested, "an' there won't be much need of my stayin' on Barren island any longer."

"We'll hope you'll be here a long spell yet, 'cause I want you, an' all them who have seen how I let John Ed lead me 'round by the nose, to have an eye out on the way I'll live up to my end of the bargain."

Paul was not disposed to listen longer to Mr. Downs's words of repentance. He believed that the farmer and his sons, now they no longer had anything to fear from the old smuggler, would do their full duty; but it was not pleasant to have them "eat humble pie," as Zenas put it, to such an extent.

Therefore the Downs family were soon left behind as the lads and Zenas hurried on to the shanty, where,

after he had arrived, Zenas at once set about filling his pipe, saying as he lighted it and stretched out at full length on the bed:

"Now I can take a little bit of comfort."

"Have you been working so terribly hard to-day?" Ned asked with a smile.

"It ain't the workin' part of it that has troubled me; but you see I never did mix any with swells, an' I allow that's jest what Mr. Sawtelle is, 'cause he must have a pile of money, an' it keeps me all haired up for fear I'll make a fool of myself in some way. Here I can do whatever I please, without thinkin' folks are watchin' out as if I was a wild animal what might turn rusty or kick up a bobbery any minute."

Before Zenas had finished his smoke Paul and Ned, without going through the formality of undressing, were sleeping soundly on the narrow bed, nor did they awaken until the sun had risen next morning, when Mr. Sawtelle looked in at the door with a cheery summons for them to "turn out."

"Breakfast aboard the yacht will be ready in half an hour, and you lads must be at the table, for the *Nera* leaves port as soon as the meal is at an end. We want all hands present at what is much the same as a leave-taking."

"Then you are going away immediately!" Paul cried with a note of regret in his tones. "Of course I knew Captain Tobi would want to get under way at once; but I hoped you might contrive to stay a day or two longer. I wish he hadn't run across that tug-boat quite so soon."

"Then you'd really be sorry not to see me again?" Mr. Sawtelle asked with an odd inflection of the voice.

"Indeed I would, more particularly since Ned and I have been counting on your telling us all you know about wireless telegraphing. We don't understand more than the rudiments, and need some one as a teacher who has had experience."

"I'm afraid it would be a case of the blind leading the blind if I should set myself up as a teacher," the gentleman replied, laughing heartily at the idea. "But you haven't seen the last of me by considerable, as my friend Zenas would say. I am bound to stay in this vicinity until we have increased the power of both your stations, and built near here a house that will be a pleasant place for the operators to live in. Mr. Lumley and Mr. Brownson will go back to New York immediately we arrive at Seaview; but I shall stay with the *Nera* between here and the mainland longer, perhaps, than you fancy."

"What do you mean?" Paul asked, puzzled by the expression on Mr. Sawtelle's face, and the tone in which he spoke.

"I have bought half an interest in Silver Fox Farm. Your father is to go with me this morning to have the partnership papers made, and also to purchase Barren island outright."

"*You* going into the business of raising silver foxes?" Ned cried incredulously.

"That is the fact, lad. To my mind it is a most interesting experiment; but perhaps I would not have

been so eager to have a share in it but for another plan which has been long in my head. This island, so far from the mainland that curious people cannot conveniently get here, will be just the place in which to build an air-ship such as Mr. Brownson believes he has invented, and by becoming part owner of the island I can carry out his ideas without fear of interruption from outsiders."

"An air-ship!" Paul exclaimed with a long indrawing of the breath. "But of course you can't make one that may really be sailed through the air!"

"Why not? It has already been done many times over——"

"But they can't be made to go where you please. They will never be more than a sort of balloon."

"When you came here to install this station, Mr. Downs was positive you could not send a message through the air without connecting wires, and you believed him to be foolish, because you had good proof that it was practicable. Now I have seen air-ships that could be navigated, notably the German craft, and, therefore, your incredulity as to the possibility is as unwarranted as was the farmer's regarding the wireless. At all events, before another year has passed, I predict that we will have something which can be handled in the air—but it is time for us to go to breakfast. We shall have ample opportunity to discuss the matter, for I intend to remain here during this summer, and, perhaps, spend the winter helping guard the foxes."

Then Mr. Sawtelle led the way to the cove, the boys following a long distance in the rear so that they

could privately talk over the wonderful proposition.

It is really time that this story should be brought to a close, for Silver Fox Farm has much the same as passed the experimental stage, and can almost be said to be a success. As a matter of fact, it was anything rather than a failure, as was shown during the following winter, when Paul and Ned both saw very many little foxes playing in the snow as happy and contented as if there was no other place in all the world than Barren island.

To look ahead only a few months, it can be said that Mr. Downs and his boys were never tempted again to be false to their employer. They soon came to understand that more money could be made by them honestly, by strictly attending to duty, than if they turned poachers with the possibility of coming within reach of the law's strong arm.

It should also be set down that John Ed Bingham was found guilty of a murderous assault on Zenas Cushing, and sentenced to a term of two years in prison. It was well for Farmer Downs that neither he nor his sons were in the court-room at the time all this was done, for the old smuggler then and there swore vengeance against them, as if believing they alone were responsible for his capture.

No, Captain Tobi did not get the money due him from John Ed on the purchase of the *Zoe*. Bingham laughed at the old ship-master when he suggested that the debt be paid, and advised in mild irony that the

captain should spend his spare time at the prison waiting for it.

As to the air-ship venture, that tale must be told at another time, for it is even a longer story than this has been; but before many months had passed after Mr. Sawtelle became a partner in Silver Fox Farm, both Paul and Ned came to understand how hasty they had been in declaring that it would be impossible to navigate the air, and then they were much better informed as to such matters.

And now in coming to the end, we will go back to that breakfast on board the *Nera* before she was towed to Seaview to be repaired, with Captain Tobi acting as master of ceremonies.

It surely seemed as if the yacht's cook had exerted himself to make of this last meal aboard the disabled craft a regular feast, for the breakfast was more like a dinner, and those who partook of it would have lingered long at the table but for the continued and noisy warnings of Captain Tobi from the deck that it was time to be under way.

During the meal plans were laid for the future. Mr. Sawtelle described the kind of a building he proposed to put up as a wireless station and at the same time a home for the managers of the farm. Mr. Brownson explained his plans for an air-ship, declaring positively he could and would build one which might be handled as readily as was the Hampton boat, at the same time stating that it was his intention to spend the following summer on Barren island for the purpose of superintending the work.

"By then your fox farm will be so far advanced that you need not spend very much time running it," he said, addressing Mr. Simpson. "The wireless will have ceased to be a novelty, and you'll wonder how you ever contrived to transact business without it. The two lads here shall be my lieutenants in the air-ship building, and Zenas can act as general superintendent. We will spend a pleasant summer, and, what is more, show that men can fly as well as walk."

"In other words," Mr. Sawtelle added laughingly, "Barren island will have become a perfect paradise for inventors and experimenters, and it will surprise me if from it does not spring that which will astonish the nations of the earth."

"There'll be somethin' sprung aboard this 'ere yacht that'll astonish them as are on board, if much more time is spent in tongue-waggin' when we should be under way, if we count on makin' Seaview before yonder clouds let out the wind that's inside 'em!" Captain Tobi roared down the companion-way. "I allow that I'm to be held responsible for gettin' the *Nera* inter port, an', that bein' the case, my orders are for sich of you idlers as are goin' ashore to make a move. The others can keep on gabblin', an' then they won't be in my way on deck."

Since Paul, Ned and Zenas were the "idlers" referred to by the angry captain, they made haste to go over the rail into Mr. Downs's dory, which had been brought around from the cove. No sooner was the boat's painter cast off than Captain Tobi gave the master of the tug orders to "move lively before there

was a chance for other tongue-waggers to come aboard."

The boys and Zenas watched the departure of the dainty little craft which had been saved from foundering by the wireless and the Hampton boat, and when she went limping out of the cove, like a lame man leaning on the shoulder of a friend, Ned said with a long indrawing of the breath:

"Only think, Paul, that if we hadn't 'played,' as father called it, with wireless telegraphy, that yacht, with her owner, his friends, and crew, would be at the bottom of the ocean! We surely have done some good in this world, even though I did fail to pass my exam. last spring!"

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